

Building Leaders Project

In 2020, the Building Leaders Project brought together, over the course of six months, 207 early childhood education and care (ECEC) program leaders using a virtual online platform to share responses and to poll key decisions. The purpose was to build consensus on the minimum professional preparation requirements for all ECEC program leaders working in schools, centers, and licensed/registered homes. This racially, ethnically, and geographically diverse group of early childhood program leadership stakeholders was comprised of program and site leaders, higher education faculty and leadership developers, and national and state system leaders. Below are the five consensus recommendations.

FIVE CONSENSUS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Unified Professional Framework for Program Leaders

Early childhood program leadership stakeholders—comprised of program and site leaders, higher education faculty and leadership developers, and national and state system leaders—were in strong agreement about the need for and value of a unified professional framework for early childhood program and site leaders working in schools, centers, and homes. The rationale most frequently provided was that a united voice has the greatest impact on policy and funding decisions.

2. Leadership Competencies Aligned with the Whole Leadership Framework

The three stakeholder groups were closely aligned regarding the core leadership competencies of program and site leaders across sectors and settings. The vast majority of participants (81%) in the project believed that program and site leaders needed a balance of administrative and pedagogical competencies to lead high-performing early childhood education and care organizations. The Whole Leadership Framework, with its three interdependent domains of administrative leadership, pedagogical leadership, and leadership essentials, reflects the leadership competencies most valued by the project participants.

3. Minimum Educational Level of a BA

There was a clear consensus that all program and site leaders need a degree. There was also consensus that program leaders needed, at minimum, the same degree as required of lead teachers in the programs. The North Star vision for all lead educators—lead teachers, site and program directors, and family child care professionals—is a minimum of a baccalaureate degree.

4. ECE competencies as a Foundation for Program Leaders

The professional preparation for program and site leaders should be linked to the early childhood education (ECE) competencies of early childhood educators. More than four-fifths of participants indicated ECE competencies should be the foundation on which additional leadership competencies sit.

5. Compensation Parity

Compensation parity was the second most frequently stated rationale for the need of a unified professional framework for early childhood program and site leaders. Strong consensus was

reached that compensation should be based on mastery of core leadership competencies and the achievement of the requisite educational degree.

Achieving consensus on the North Star of a unified framework for the professional preparation and compensation of program leaders is, however, only the first step on the journey. Conducting an equity impact assessment, building broad buy-in from organizations and individuals, guiding systems change in higher education and government, and ensuring sufficient funding so that early childhood education and care program leaders have equitable access to the education and training, as well as additional supports, to achieve these professional standards will be the challenges ahead over the next decade.

Whole Leadership Framework

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS (BIRTH TO THIRD GRADE)



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