Credit Where Credit is Due

Expanding Credit for Prior Learning in ECE Higher Education Programs

DECEMBER 2024

Credit for prior learning (CPL) is a crucial component of a comprehensive strategy to build the quality and supply of child care and early learning programs by investing in the education and compensation of early childhood educators. By providing pathways towards formal recognition of existing competence, and unlocking compensation linked to qualifications and public school pay parity, CPL is a solution that bridges across early childhood education's multiple truths:

TRUE	ALSO TRUE
A complex set of knowledge and skills are needed for early childhood educators to equitably and effectively support young children and their families.[1]	Early childhood educators' knowledge and skills are acquired through experience and expertise in and outside of higher education settings.[2]
Early childhood educators have pursued and want to pursue credentials and degrees, for reasons that include but aren't limited to strengthening their teaching quality and being recognized for their expertise.[3]	High costs, limited accessibility, and lack of compensation are real barriers for early childhood educators pursuing credentials and degrees.[4]
Credentials and degrees have a positive impact on teaching quality.[5]	Not all credential and degree programs provide high quality experiences that lead to positive impacts.[6]

Because many different professions and industries require credentials and degrees for individuals to practice, they frequently utilize CPL strategies to recognize individuals' competencies within the context of a degree.[7] CPL is not a new concept in early childhood education professional preparation programs either—more than 50% of ECE higher education programs report that they offer CPL.[8]

Yet to ensure that a broader and more diverse array of current and future early childhood educators can benefit from formal recognition of their expertise that helps unlock increased compensation aligned with qualifications, there is a need to expand CPL practices and advance more expedient CPL models. This is particularly true as mixed-delivery preK models expand across states and localities, presenting a crucial opportunity to ensure that early childhood educators, particularly those working in child care centers and family child care homes, are set up for success in being able to equitably access preK funds and unlock the comparable compensation that is attainable with comparable qualifications.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) are partnering on a series of resources to support ECE higher education programs and policymakers within higher education systems and state legislatures in implementing and expanding ECE college credit for recognizing competencies gained from prior learning and professional experiences. This partnership will yield three elements:[A]

1. This initial report, which explores the purpose of CPL and its importance within the context of the ECE profession, provides an overview of CPL models in other fields, and highlights examples of existing ECE CPL practices.

2. A webinar series for higher education and state policy leaders that will dive deeper into policy and practice considerations for CPL in ECE.

3. A policy recommendations report designed to help states advance and expand implementation of CPL policies and practices that increase access to higher education for early childhood educators working in all settings, with special attention to those working in family child care homes, those who speak a language other than English, and those who have traditionally been underserved in higher education settings.

Why Credit for Prior Learning Matters for the ECE Profession

In developing a roadmap for an "effective, diverse, well-prepared, and well-compensated workforce," *The Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession* outlines the structure of a future profession based around clear and consistent ECE designations (ECE I, II and III) in which early childhood educators hold recognized ECE credentials and degrees that demonstrate their proficiency in the profession's agreed-upon core competencies.[9] The inclusion of degrees and credentials draws upon the science of child development and early learning which makes clear that those responsible for educating young children need and deploy complex knowledge and skills.

Across all states and settings, many members of the ECE workforce already hold degrees or have some college credits; however, for far too many, access to both higher education and compensation parity remains out of reach.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS ACCESSING HIGHER EDUCATION

	Early childhood educators working in child care centers	Early childhood educators working in home-based settings (Listed)
Hold a Baccalaureate Degree	30%	20%
Hold an Associate Degree	18%	20%
Hold some college credit	30%	35%

Source: 2024 Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. Authors' analysis of NSECE 2019 data.

[A] The webinar series is occurring November 2024-April 2025, and the policy report will be released in April 2025. NAEYC will be posting registration announcements and the report through its communications channels.

And, while the ECE workforce's racial and linguistic diversity—with almost half of the workforce being educators of color and a third of the workforce speaking a language other than English—benefits children and families and enriches the knowledge and practice base for the profession, systemic factors have yielded disproportionately lower levels of degree attainment among Black and Latino/a educators.[10]

Since maintaining and growing the ECE workforce's diversity is essential, investing substantially in removing fiscal and structural constraints that impede the achievement of a diverse and effective early care and education workforce in all roles and across settings is also essential. This means actively creating stronger, clearer, and more equitable pathways to high-quality degrees and credentials that result in increased compensation and equal opportunity for educators.

Expanding credit for prior learning options in ECE higher education programs, in particular, is a strategy with multiple advantages in early childhood education:

> It honors the acquired knowledge and skills that are aligned with the profession's agreed-upon core competencies in the context of a recognized, portable higher education credential.

> It brings a credential or degree that may be wanted or needed more within reach.

> It unlocks pathways to increased compensation, particularly in the context of expanded mixed-delivery preK programs at the state and local levels.

In addition to credit for prior learning, strategies that are part of a multi-faceted approach required to grow and sustain a diverse, effective, well-prepared, well-supported, and well-compensated ECE profession may include:

> developing more flexible program delivery models responsive to educators already working in the field;

> increasing the number and reach of programs provided in languages other than English;

> recognizing degrees and credentials earned in other countries;

> developing and implementing courses that embed early childhood content into gateway math courses or reading/English courses (or literacy courses);

> increasing access to comprehensive scholarships, grants, and loan forgiveness;

> investing in cohorts, mentorship, culturally and linguistically competent advisors and supervisors to provide support for navigating the higher education process and effectively support field experiences; and

> providing wrap-around supports to educators (e.g., child care, tutoring, housing/food resources).

What is Credit for Prior Learning?

Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) is a set of well-established, researched, and validated methods for assessing non-collegiate learning for college credit. Credit for prior learning often encompasses two bodies of work: Transfer Credit and Proficiency Credit. In Transfer Credit models, frequently referred to as "transfer and articulation," these policies and practice refer to how credit for students' coursework is transferred between institutions of higher education through a standardized process. Transfer and articulation policies and practices are an important strategy for supporting early childhood educators in advancing their postsecondary credentials, particularly as they move from the associate degree to the baccalaureate degree.

This report, however, focuses on Proficiency Credit models as part of Credit for Prior Learning (CPL). Proficiency Credit offers an authentic assessment developed by faculty and subject matter experts to evaluate a student's learning gained through work experience, industry credentials, and/or non-postsecondary trainings including professional development courses and other non-credit trainings. The learning is then connected to a specific course's learning outcomes or competencies. If college-level learning is demonstrated and the learning outcomes or competencies are mastered through an assessment process, the student may earn course credit and be exempted from the course with a proficiency grade.

Credit for Prior Learning Increases Equitable Access to Higher Education

CPL Impact on Postsecondary Degree Completion

Adult students who engage in CPL tend to achieve better outcomes than those who do not receive CPL credit. Adults with CPL credit typically have higher GPAs, complete their degrees faster, and exhibit higher retention and completion rates. A 2020 report by CAEL and Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), found that CPL increased completion rates for adult students by 49–73%, depending on the type of CPL.[11] Students who complete their degrees sooner are better positioned to have options within the workforce, accelerate their careers, and increase their earning potential.

CPL Impact on Postsecondary Time and Cost Savings

CPL has been well-documented to significantly reduce the time and costs required for students to complete their degrees. CPL can save students an average of 9 to 12 months, depending on the industry and academic pathway. This reduction in time is crucial, as it enables students to expedite their studies and either enter or re-enter the job market more quickly.[12] In addition to time savings, CPL also offers substantial financial benefits. The CAEL and WICHE study found that based on the number of CPL credits earned and the associated fees charged by institutions, students saved from approximately $1,500 at community colleges to as much as $10,200 at baccalaureate-granting private non-profit institutions.[13]

For adult learners who are often constrained by both time and financial resources, such as early childhood educators, the ability to complete their degrees efficiently is paramount. The time and cost savings afforded by CPL are critical in enhancing degree completion rates. Moreover, reducing financial burdens addresses issues of equity and expands access to higher education for underrepresented and underserved populations. This time savings also enables employers and industries to hire and promote credentialed workers more quickly.

CPL Impact on Student Validation and Motivation

CPL helps students feel validated and valued for their prior knowledge and experiences, motivating them to begin their academic journey confidently.[14] Students who take advantage of CPL are more likely to enroll in additional credit hours. Data show that CPL students exhibit higher retention rates and are more likely to complete their degrees (and complete more credit hours) compared to their peers who do not earn CPL credits.[15]

Moreover, by earning CPL credits for introductory courses, students can focus their time and financial resources on more specialized, major-specific coursework that is both relevant and engaging. This shift allows students to make the most of their educational experience while increasing their likelihood of completing a degree or earning additional credentials.

CPL Impact on Student Recruitment

CPL is a powerful recruitment tool that positions an institution as adult-friendly and accessible. A 2022 study by CAEL, Strada, and Hanover Research found that 84% of likely college enrollees said the ability to earn credit for life and work experiences would strongly influence their choice of college or university.[16] With enrollment being a top priority for many institutions, CPL offers a clear advantage, attracting adult learners and enhancing the institution's appeal to a broader audience. Highlighting CPL can significantly boost an institution's ability to meet enrollment goals while supporting student success.

An Overview of Proficiency Credit CPL Models

There are a number of CPL models for awarding credit based on demonstrated proficiencies, and how they are used can vary by discipline and industry. Effective credit for prior learning heavily depends on selecting the appropriate assessment method for evaluating the learning outcome. Courses that rely extensively on instructional objectives, such as labs and lectures, may pose challenges, as students need to be creative in providing supporting evidence. The type of CPL offered will also vary based on institutional resources. CPL practices can vary not only by institution but also across industries and disciplines. CAEL has collaborated with institutions to implement CPL in fields such as IT, healthcare management, lower-level social work, and business management. These disciplines, particularly at the lower course levels, provide opportunities to apply diverse CPL methods.

Individualized Student Portfolios or Portfolio Assessments

Commonly referred to as portfolios, these are a form of CPL that include a written narrative detailing the process of learning (what, when, where, how) that a student has undergone. As part of the portfolio, students provide supporting evidence or artifacts with verifiable documentation and proof of learning. This documentation should demonstrate how the student's learning aligns with the college-level outcomes being petitioned. Faculty subject matter experts (SMEs) assess the portfolios using a predetermined rubric. Once the faculty SME has assessed the portfolio using the rubric, they can provide a summary judgment with a credit/no credit recommendation. This feedback can include both positive and critical feedback and should provide the student with an opportunity to learn.

> **ECE EXAMPLE**
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> *At Waukesha County Technical College, portfolio assessments offer a valuable pathway for early childhood educators to earn credit for prior learning. Students compile learning reflections and supporting artifacts to demonstrate mastery of course competencies. ECE faculty evaluate these portfolios against established criteria, granting one opportunity for revision if needed. Portfolios are usually submitted in writing but can also be presented via recording or in person. Successful assessments, meeting minimum performance standards, lead to awarded course credit, with each prior learning portfolio costing $90 and requiring a separate assessment for each course. Credit values align with those of the associated courses.*

Evaluation of Training or Industry Credentials

Many institutional evaluations focus on industry credentials, licensures, and employer training, often referred to as non-credit-to-credit crosswalks or mappings. These crosswalk maps provide low-maintenance, long-term credit pathways for students, granting credit once the training has been evaluated. Organizations like the American Council on Education (ACE), the National College Credit Recommendation Service (NCCRS), and others offer centralized reviews of corporate training. For example, the ACE military guide provides a comprehensive evaluation of military learning and experiences that include college-level learning. Institutions can also develop their own crosswalks to grant credit.

> **ECE EXAMPLE** (RECOGNIZING THE CDA IN CPL)
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> *Many ECE higher education programs give credit for prior learning for the Child Development Associate®
> (CDA) Credential™, though the number of credit hours varies from institution to institution.*
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> *In one statewide example, Missouri's Community Colleges recognize the CDA. The colleges that offer short certificates such as a 16-credit hour Early Learning Assistant Certificate, 32-credit hour early childhood*

education certificate, or Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education are able to award program-enrolled individuals that have earned at least 12 credit hours of college credit and hold an active Infant-Toddler or Preschool CDA Credential with 6 to 9 additional credits towards their ECE program. The number of credits depends on the institution.[17]

In another example, the Early Childhood Innovation Center (ECIC), housed at Delaware State University, has established strong partnerships with all the institutions of higher education in Delaware who offer ECE programs to establish credit for prior learning and/or prior learning assessments for early childhood education professionals who hold a CDA. Delaware State University, Delaware Technical Community College, and Wilmington University have established agreements with the ECIC to award 12 credits for current and incoming students who hold CDAs. This means that any early childhood professional with the CDA credential will be awarded four, 3-credit program specific courses on their college/university transcript. These credits allow early childhood professionals to graduate with their degree in early childhood education at an accelerated rate and place more credentialed and degreed professionals in the early childhood field.

ECE EXAMPLE (RECOGNIZING PD/TRAINING IN CPL)

The Community College of Rhode Island offers several CPL models for educators to earn college credit in their ECE programs. One model provides course credit to educators who have taken at least 20 clock hours of ECE training through a pre-approved list of PD providers, including state-created trainings. In this model, educators must provide evidence they have taken the required trainings, and then they are awarded 3 credits for either an ECE elective or required course. Individuals can apply to receive up to 6 college credits through this CPL method and can receive credit for one elective and one required course.[18]

Challenge Exams or Customized Exams

Often called "institutional exams" or "challenge exams," these are among the most commonly used forms of CPL. According to the American Association Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRO), nearly half of all institutions use them.[19] Challenge exams are locally developed, administered, and evaluated by institutional faculty. They may be based on the existing final exam for the course for which credit would be given and generally utilize lower-order thinking assessment methods (e.g., multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank).

ECE EXAMPLE

At Charter Oak State College in Connecticut, students can acquire up to 12 credits toward an Associate of Science degree for successfully passing its Pathway Exams focused on four ECE courses (3 credits each). The challenge exam, used on introductory-level content, consists of 100 multiple choice questions.[20] To receive credit for the course, students must attain a 75% passing score on the exam. If that score is not achieved, students may retest, but they must wait 6 months to retake any exam. Once the course credits have been awarded, they are accepted by all of the state's community colleges and Post University.[21]

Standardized Exams

Another of the most common forms of CPL accepted by colleges and universities is standardized proficiency exams offered by national third-party organizations. These standardized tests are widely accepted because they are developed by committees of faculty subject matter experts from across the country. The process is supported by scientific validation and empirical evidence at every step, from test development to administration and scoring. Examples include Advanced Placement (AP), the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and DSST (DANTES Subject Standardized Tests).

Skills Assessments and Oral Interviews

These practical demonstrations allow students to apply skills, procedures, or behaviors needed to fulfill course learning outcomes. In the skills assessment model faculty members have a clear role in observing actual performance and assessing its quality against learning outcomes. In the oral interview model, faculty design a set of specific behavioral questions to reflect the outcomes of the course. In both models, an assessor familiar with the course content evaluates student responses or practices and the criteria for "passing" in the same way as a traditional course. Evaluations use a checklist, rubric, or protocol developed for both the student and the assessor to ensure that the assessment is systematic and fair, and that the documentation is available to support the award of credit. These checklists or rubrics should incorporate the following:

› identifies the learning outcomes that the demonstration will address

› lists specific skills and/or actions to be performed in the demonstration

› identifies and describes equipment and materials that must be used and will be provided by the college or the student

› gives direction for setting up the lab or space so that all assessors do it the same way

› indicates the basis for scoring including levels of demonstration and minimum scores for earning credit

Proficiency CPL Model Considerations

The following chart summarizes some of the strengths and challenges associated with each CPL model as it relates to expediency and costs for students and higher education institutions.

	STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES
Portfolio Assessments	Portfolio assessments are one of the most flexible forms of CPL, being student-centered and allowing course outcomes to be met without attending college classroom activities. The narrative format also values the individual's voice and experiences.	Portfolios can be challenging for certain courses and disciplines, especially those with subjective content or unclear learning outcomes. Portfolios often require significant faculty involvement.
Evaluation of Training or Industry Credentials	Once established, crosswalks offer an immediate and automatic pathway to credit.	Non-credit-to-credit crosswalks or course mappings may require a significant initial time investment.
Challenge Exams	These are the most common of all institutionally based assessments because they are easier to scale and administer once established. Challenge exams are also student-centered and can be adapted to meet individual students' needs.	Challenge exams may require an initial investment of faculty time.
Standardized Exams	This is the most commonly used CPL method. Standardized exams are convenient and can be adopted and implemented quickly. They are scored objectively and can test a large number of students. This reduces or eliminates faculty time demands in instrument development and grading.	Standardized exams are more summative than formative. Standardized exams are also unlikely, or more difficult, to match the specific goals and objectives of a program/institution.
Skills Assessments and Oral Interviews	These models are student-centered and promote creativity and student motivation. They engage students in active learning. These assessments can provide a dimension of depth not available in the classroom. Scoring can be done holistically or analytically.	Both models demand considerable faculty involvement in their creation and ongoing evaluation.

Essential Elements of Proficiency Credit CPL Models

CPL models and implementation of models vary within and across institutions of higher education. Institutional resources, accreditation requirements, subject matter, and institutional priorities may affect the implementation and availability of CPL offerings across institutions and regions. Regardless, though, there are core elements that should drive how institutions implement CPL so that they are administered in rigorous, equitable and trusted ways that ensure institutions meet quality assurance and academic integrity standards.[22] Namely, institutions should:

› **Award credit or competencies only for evidence of knowledge/learning, not experience or time spent.** While experience is important, it is the actual learning that takes place that warrants college credit. Credit should be granted for college-level learning that encompasses a certain level of breadth and/or depth and complexity that already exists in college curricula.

› **Ensure that CPL assessments are affordable to the student.** Assessment fees should be based on the services performed rather than the credit awarded. Since federal financial aid cannot be used to cover the costs of credit for prior learning assessments, imposing high fees for evaluation of learning can significantly lower the number of students who may be able to utilize CPL. In many instances if the fee is too high, it may be more economically advantageous for the student to take the course the traditional way which eliminates the benefit for CPL—often for those that could benefit from it the most. While institutions do incur costs for the time and effort of assessing the learning, charging for services rather than credit allows the institution to balance their budget considerations with an equitable practice that may have significant returns, over time, benefitting the students and the institution.

ECE EXAMPLE

At the Community College of Vermont (CCV), six 3 credit ECE related courses are part of CCV's Competency-Based Pathway approach to CPL. Experienced early childhood educators can complete standardized assignments aligned with course competencies entirely online and at a much-reduced price ($150) of a typical 3 credit course (approximately $840 in-state). This innovative pathway saves the student time and money, as a faculty member that teaches the course is hired to evaluate the student's learning within 60 days. Similarly, CCV also provides a traditional Course Challenge option for other courses not part of the Competency-Based Pathway, for a one-time fee equal to only one credit hour (currently $280 in-state). Another popular CPL option is through enrollment in a course where they are guided through the process of preparing a portfolio of their individual learning. Up to 200 ECE students benefit from CPL annually through the college's various ECE CPL offerings. The average early childhood educator saves $3,000-$8,000 on tuition while gaining the average 12-30 credits in one of two portfolio choices.[23]

› **Offer multiple models of CPL programs to provide maximum flexibility for students to demonstrate proficiency in the relevant competencies.** The CPL methods offered should be inclusive of learning that comes from a wide range of work and life experiences. Students from underrepresented populations tend to bring knowledge from a wider range of sources and therefore may benefit from having more CPL options to demonstrate their learning.

› **Ensure information about CPL policies and procedures is transparent to the student.** CPL policies should be easily accessible and provide clear and concise information to both prospective and current students. These policies and procedures should be clear and direct on the why and how students can participate in the CPL program, whom they should contact, and any limitations that may exist. This information should avoid vague statements or instructions that require students to have to dig around for this valuable information.

› **Provide support to students in meeting the expectations of the CPL model.** Effective advising is crucial to students being able to access and succeed in using CPL options.[24] Institutions should integrate CPL discussions into established processes that take place early in the student's career at the institution. Institutions may

consider specialized CPL advisors that meet with adult students, or students from underrepresented groups, to explore CPL possibilities and to provide additional encouragement for those who might be potential CPL candidates. Overall, ensuring that advisors who meet with students, from enrollment advisors to academic or faculty advisors, have a strong understanding of the value of CPL and how it works for students is critical to ensuring the success of a CPL program. Other supports an institution might offer include offering workshops or courses to help students develop their portfolios, or test preparation for other CPL methods.

ECE EXAMPLE

Charter Oak State College in Connecticut offers challenge exams as a CPL option (see example earlier in this report). To help students prepare for each exam, the college offers free study guides that outline the topics covered by each exam and include 10 sample multiple-choice questions and answers. The guides also list textbooks that cover the course materials to assist students in preparing for the exams.[25]

> **Ensure the assessment process is faculty-driven.** Assessment of CPL is integral to learning because it leads to and enables future learning. Therefore, the assessment process should be faculty-driven and based on criteria for outcomes that are clearly articulated and shared among constituencies. Assessment policies and procedures should result from inclusive deliberation and be shared with all constituencies.

> **Support faculty and staff involved in developing and implementing the CPL process.** The success of implementing a CPL model depends on many different people within the institution. Ensuring that all faculty and staff have a strong understanding of the value of CPL and how it works for students is paramount. This support should include allocated time within workloads for the development and implementation of CPL processes as well as training and continuing professional development.

> **Ensure the final determination of credit awards and competence levels is made by appropriate subject matter and credentialing experts.** Institutional faculty, serving as internal subject matter experts, should be responsible for assessing student learning and making informed credit award recommendations. They ensure that student support is comprehensive and that all quality assurance standards are upheld to departmental and institutional standards.

> **Make quality assurance an integral part of CPL programs.** CPL data should be tracked, regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised to meet institutional and learner needs. Collecting current data leads to making strategic CPL program implementation decisions. Institutions should also ensure they adhere to their regional and program accreditation standards.

A successful CPL program requires careful planning and implementation. In addition to the foundational elements described above, other key components include having a clear CPL value proposition—understanding why CPL is offered—and making decisions on which CPL methods and programs to offer. Institutions must also consider their target student market and how effectively CPL messaging reaches them. Resources such as staffing, professional development, and data collection are essential, and partnerships may be needed to expand capacity. Additionally, institutions must account for both fixed and variable costs of running CPL programs, while balancing revenue goals, which may range from covering testing, evaluation, or transcription costs to program administration. Understanding the role of CPL as a long-term investment is critical.

Credit for prior learning is making a significant impact on students at the institutional level, proving its effectiveness in enhancing educational outcomes. However, to truly unlock CPL's potential and ensure it benefits all students, system and state-level policies must take center stage. These policies have the power to drive wider adoption of CPL by helping institutions scale their efforts, making this opportunity more accessible and equitable for diverse student populations. State and system-level policymakers have a critical role to play. They should actively collaborate with institutional leadership and faculty to develop consistent, streamlined processes that transcend institutional and state boundaries such as standardized credit hour recommendations that eliminate

confusion for students, institutions (awarding credit), and employers (understanding what a credential confers). By establishing uniform standards and clear pathways for CPL, policymakers can ensure that CPL is not just available but also of the highest quality. Such efforts will accelerate the widespread implementation of CPL, empowering more students to leverage their prior learning and experience, and paving the way for a stronger, more inclusive higher education system. In our next report, we will explore policy and practice considerations and intersections at the programmatic, institutional/systems, and state levels that can support and accelerate implementation of CPL for early childhood educators.

The Power of Credit for Prior Learning

Supporting and expanding CPL requires strong institutional buy-in, grounded in a clear understanding of its transformative value. CPL not only attracts a broader range of students but also plays a critical role in promoting equity by serving underrepresented and underserved populations, including students who gained expertise outside of higher education settings, who encounter financial and structural barriers to accessing higher education settings, who work full-time, and who earned a degree in another country or primarily speak languages other than English.[26] It empowers students to leverage their prior learning, enabling them to finish their degrees faster and with greater confidence in their academic journey.

As we continue building toward an ECE profession in which educators are supported in holding recognized degrees and credentials that demonstrate their proficiency in the core competencies of the profession, we must ensure that when considering the proficiencies of early childhood educators, state systems connect to and align with higher education. The wide variety of existing CPL models provide opportunities to do just that by helping higher education ECE programs make choices and implement sound CPL methods based on their programs' context and resources. State systems and policy makers can support higher education institutions, and, more importantly, spark system and statewide CPL efforts that are flexible, responsive, and provide cost savings for educators and programs.

Ultimately, credit for prior learning is an important strategy for supporting our strong and diverse ECE workforce in equitably accessing and obtaining ECE degrees that are portable, will be recognized across settings and states, and lead towards unlocked and increased compensation.

Endnotes

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8   Results from a 2024 NAEYC survey of ECE higher education programs with 400 ECE faculty respondents. Overall, over half of respondents indicated that their ECE higher education program offers CPL. The use of CPL, though, is more common in ECE associate degree programs (59%) than ECE baccalaureate programs (41%).

9   American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; American Federation of Teachers; Associate Degree Early Childhood Teacher Educators; Child Care Aware of America; Council for Professional Recognition; Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children; Early Care and Education Consortium; National Association for Family Child Care; National Association for the Education of Young Children; National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators; National Association of Elementary School Principals; National Education Association; National Head Start Association; Service Employees International Union; & ZERO TO THREE. 2020. Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession. Washington, DC: NAEYC. https://www.commissionece.org/unifying-framework.

10   McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., Powell, A., Jaggi, S., Kim, Y., Knight, J., Muñoz, S., & Schlieber, M. (2024). Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2024. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/workforce-index-2024/

11   Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, & Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. (2020, October). *The PLA boost.* cael.org/pla-impact

12   Ibid.

13   Ibid.

14   *Building Adult Learner Leaders for Institutional Effectiveness (ALLIES): Research Findings and a New Framework for Supporting Institutional Change.* October 2022.

15   Council for Adult and Experiential Learning, & Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. (2020, October). *The PLA boost.* cael.org/pla-impact

16   CAEL. (2022). A*ttracting adults with credit for prior learning*. Council for Adult and Experiential Learning. **https://www.cael.org/news-and-resources/attracting-adult-learners-with-credit-for-prior-learning**

17   Information retrieved from personal correspondence with Tracy Huang, Moberly Area Community College Early Childhood Coordinator, October 25, 2023. (December 2024)

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23   Information retrieved from **https://ccv.edu/academics/credit-for-what-you-know/credit-course-challenge/; https://ccv.edu/financial/tuition/** (December 2024)

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25   Information retrieved from **https://www.charteroak.edu/exams/cosc.php; https://www.charteroak.edu/exams/** (December 2024)

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