COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY EDUCATION & CARE

PHASE II MAPPING STUDY
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
~FULL REPORT~

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Executive Summary

Phases I and II of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care's (EEC) Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) Mapping Project show EEC's commitment to their vision and mission to provide meaningful, quality higher education to the early education workforce. EEC continues to work with institutions throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to make higher education attainable to professionals throughout the state. To ensure that all children have access to quality programs, EEC initiated the Mapping Project, a two-phase project that works to make early childhood education degree and certificate programs more accessible and easy to understand. The focus of Phase II is to facilitate the transfer of credits between IHEs by identifying a common set of courses across institutions and mapping these courses to one or more of the EEC Core Competency areas. Findings from this projects are intended to promote conversations between and within EEC and IHEs that will help to ease the process of credit transfer for students entering or returning to higher education programs in Massachusetts.

Findings Related to Course Analysis and Core Competency Areas

1. There is clear alignment and cohesiveness between required ECE courses and the following EEC core competency areas:
   - Core Competency #1: Understanding the Growth and Development of Children and Youth
   - Core Competency #2: Guiding and Interacting with Children and Youth
   - Core Competency #3: Partnering with Families and Communities
   - Core Competency #5: Learning Environments and Implementing Curriculum
   - Core Competency #6: Observation, Assessment, and Documentation

2. Courses in the Introduction to Early Childhood Education and Working with Children with Special Needs themes are not tied to one specific competency, but have been identified as areas for potential transferability.

3. Transferability may be more complex for courses in the Curriculum Development theme because of the specificity of the course subjects.

4. Three EEC core competencies are not consistently represented in required courses:
   - Core Competency #4: Health, Safety, and Nutrition
   - Core Competency #7: Program Planning and Development
   - Core Competency #8: Professionalism and Leadership

<u>Findings Related to Course Transferability</u>

Although IHEs have policies and procedures around transferability, transfer of credits is individualized; it is a site and often student specific, bureaucratic process dependent upon several variables, and often involving several academic departments. In reviewing responses from 24 department heads from the institutions in this study, we were able to identify some trends:

1. When IHEs are considering transferability, they tend to look at:

   a. transcripts, often including a review by the registrar, admissions, advising, and education department;

   b. the content of the course, which typically includes a transcript review, an examination of the course descriptions, one-on-one discussions with individual students about courses and if necessary, a review of syllabi;

   c. whether or not the credits obtained were from an accredited institution; and

   d. whether the student achieved a grade of a C or better in courses that were deemed transferable.

2. Certain foundational/introductory courses (e.g., Introduction to Early Childhood Education, Child Growth and Development) are accepted for credit. Many of these courses are outlined in articulation agreements.

3. If institutions do not allow transfer credits for a required course, they are likely to offer counting the credits toward an elective.

4. Syllabi are not a clear indicator of transferability. A review of syllabi did not provide useful information when looking at <u>systemic</u> transferability. This type of in-depth review could be more appropriate on an individual basis when department heads are meeting with students to determine whether or not a specific course is transferable.

5. Articulation agreements are helpful in determining what specific courses are transferable. Agreements are transparent to the student and advisor. This process works especially well in the public sector. In the private sector more autonomous decisions are made around transferability, which are not always clear to the student up front.

6. Course descriptions are the most effective method for determining transferability. We found this trend in responses from IHEs as well as in our own analysis of courses.

7. Course numbers are not a clear indicator of transferability.

8. Teacher licensure plays a large role in transferability for those majoring in Early Childhood Education. If a student is on the licensure track the transfer of courses and/or credits is more unlikely than if in the non-licensure ECE track. The view is that for those in the licensure track

more specialized coursework is needed in order for professionals to adequately provide education in the public school arena (K-2).

Recommendations/Considerations

Using the fact sheets and findings from Phases I and II as a guide, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, the Department of Higher Education, and representatives from the IHEs included in this study can continue conversations to look at the potential for greater transferability between institutions. We recognize that within both IHEs and state agencies, including the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, people have been working diligently on this the credit transfer process across higher education. We hope that a combination of both their enduring efforts and our concentrated study will lead to continuity in this process.

Findings from these projects can be used in multiple arenas. Based on the evidence collected and the overall findings, the following recommendations and/or considerations for action and research steps were developed:

1. Continue to work with private and public IHEs to increase transferability of courses across those institutions.

2. Use information from this project to bolster the reasons for state IHEs to comply with ECE Transfer Compact.

3. Look at the three core competency areas that are not being addressed to determine if and if so how early educators are gaining the skills for these competencies. This finding can guide future professional development or course development.

4. Place an emphasis on conversations related to transferability between two- and four-year institutions as there is less consistency in transfer polices despite state initiatives. Related to this, further explore the evidence to address the misconception that students who are transferring in credits from two-year colleges are not adequately prepared as future teachers who may be working in Kindergarten through second grade.

5. Build upon best practices being used at some IHEs to clearly explain to students which courses transfer and which are required to be taken at the particular IHE (e.g., practices in place at Bridgewater State).

6. Continue to include IHEs in the development of this process. Continue to gather IHEs concerns and innovations to build buy-in and increase the likelihood of compliance and appreciation of efforts to increase transferability between courses.

7. Examine elective courses for transferability and alignment with core competencies.

8. Examine practicum courses for transferability and alignment with core competencies. This is especially important now that one practicum course is included in the ECE Compact.

9. Consider including students in the development of the credit transfer process. Consider gathering students' opinions on usability of information provided on EEC's website and in working with IHEs on course transfer.

10. Continue the current work and collaboration between IHEs, the Department of Higher Education (DHE), and EEC regarding best practices and protocols of course transferability between two- and four-year institutions. Consider distributing a survey to the multiple parties involved in the credit transfer process (including students, faculty/administration at IHEs, members of DHE and EEC) to identify best practices and protocols that currently exist. If not already being implemented or considered by DHE and EEC, and depending on survey results, some suggestions of protocol to consider include:
    a. samples of articulation agreements that work
    b. how to conduct a fair, objective course and/or transcript reviews
    c. what to ask students during an advising session on transferability
    d. differences in transferring credits/courses in licensure vs. non-licensure track
    e. how to work with registrar, admissions, and/or advising departments

Rationale

Purpose of IHE Studies

Phases I and II of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care's (EEC) Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) Mapping Project show EEC's commitment to their vision and mission to provide meaningful, quality higher education to the early education workforce. EEC continues to work with institutions throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to make higher education attainable to professionals throughout the state. To ensure that all children have access to quality programs, EEC initiated the Mapping Project, a two-phase project that works to make early childhood education degree and certificate programs more accessible and easy to understand.

Review of IHE I

In April of 2010, the EEC, in partnership with the Head Start State Collaboration Office, contracted with Oldham Innovative Research (OIR) for Phase I of this project to map 28 Massachusetts colleges, universities, and community colleges by gathering detailed information about early childhood education and related degrees and certificates. EEC's vision was that this central repository of information, along with individual program profiles, (all of which are publicly available on EEC's website) would ease the process for early educators and the out-of-school time workforce who are furthering their education of selecting an IHE and degree that best fits their needs. By aiding the attainment of meaningful, quality higher education for the early childhood workforce, this valuable project built off EEC's mission to ensure that all children have access to quality programs. Based on the information gathered and verified by IHEs, OIR was able to produce a set of findings and recommendations. A key finding in the Phase I report was that transferring credits between institutions continues to be an area of difficulty for both early educators continuing their education and faculty at IHEs who work on credit transfers. Ease of transferring credits between institutions is critical to ensure that students returning to higher education or starting their early education degree can finish in a reasonable amount of time. It is also crucial for those students wanting to build upon their associates degree by completing a bachelors degree. As there are already a number of barriers to child care professionals starting and finishing higher education degrees, EEC is invested in removing the specific barriers related to the transfer of credits. EEC addressed this concern by initiating Phase II of the project.

Purpose of IHE II Study

Phase II of the IHE Mapping Project originated from a basic need to assist students, faculty, and administration at 33 IHEs across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the credit transfer process between institutions. By comparing the required courses for early childhood education bachelors, associates, and certificate degrees across institutions, this project examined the process of accepting courses and/or credits between institutions, to aid early educators in completing their degrees. With these goals in mind, and the hope of uniting MA higher education around these goals, EEC again contracted with Oldham Innovative Research to compare the early education and care degree programs at 33 IHEs in MA.

Private vs. Public IHEs

■ Private ■ Public

27%

73%

**Table 1: IHEs Included in Study**

Two Year State Colleges	State Colleges/Universities	Private Colleges
Berkshire Community College Bristol Community College Bunker Hill Community College Cape Cod Community College Greenfield Community College Holyoke Community College Mass Bay Community College Massasoit Community College Middlesex Community College Mt. Wachusett Community College North Shore Community College Northern Essex Community College Quinsigamond Community College Roxbury Community College Springfield Technical College Urban College of Boston[1]	Bridgewater State University Fitchburg State University Framingham State University MA College of Liberal Arts Salem State University UMass Amherst: University Without Walls[2] UMass Boston Westfield State University Worcester State University	Anna Maria College Bay Path College Becker College Cambridge College Curry College Lesley College Springfield College Wheelock College

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[1] Urban College of Boston is a private two-year college. The rest of the two-year colleges named are state colleges

[2] University of Massachusetts Amherst: University Without Walls (UWW) is unique in that there are no required early childhood education courses. The UWW courses included in this study are those that are commonly taken by students who have a concentration in ECE.

From our work on Phase I of this project, through both web-based research and conversations with faculty at IHEs, OIR learned that understanding and facilitating the transfer of credits between institutions, as well as understanding how individual courses meet EEC's eight core competency areas,

Table 2. Total Number of Courses Catalogued

	69	124	201
	12 Certificate Programs	16 Associates Programs	17 Bachelors Programs
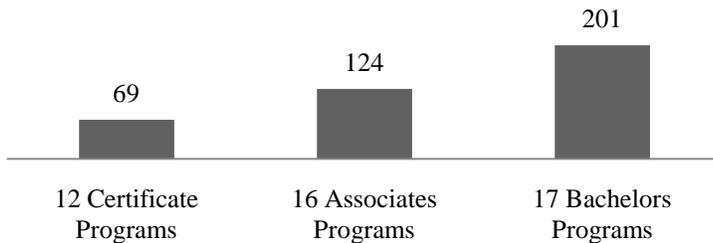
are two particularly complex aspects of early childhood education degree programs. Phase II of this study addressed these issues by comparing required courses at the same 28 institutions that were included in Phase I, along with an additional six institutions. With the goal of identifying between five and ten common course themes across public and private IHEs that may lend themselves to transferability, OIR conducted a basic review of all required courses for early childhood education bachelors, associates, and certificate degrees at the chosen institutions. Required courses were evaluated for the following degree programs: 1) bachelors level teacher licensure and non-licensure; 2) associates level career and transfer track; and 3) a variety of related ECE certificate programs (i.e., preschool, infant/toddler, and early childhood development). In total, 45 degree programs at the 33 IHEs were included in the study, resulting in a categorization of 394 courses. This study did not focus on general education, elective, practicum, or seminar course requirements[3].

There are three key deliverables in Phase II, one of which is this report. The additional deliverables include: (1) a database with information on targeted courses, and (2) fact sheets for the seven identified common course themes[4].

Methodology

Identifying Course Themes

We structured our analysis of courses around the required ECE-specific courses for each degree. As discussed in the methodological limitations section of this report, we had to limit the extent of our course analysis due to the time frame and budget of this project. By focusing on a concrete set of

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[3] In conversations with EEC, it was decided that OIR would not include elective, practicum, or seminar courses in this study. Practicum and seminar courses are often required to be taken at the institution at which students are transferring into and therefore are not transferable. This study's focus was on those courses that would potentially be transferable. General education courses were also not reviewed in this study as they are not specific to early education and would not be expected to align with the EEC core competencies, which was one of the goals of the study.

[4] These fact sheets can serve as a catalyst for conversations with the IHEs around areas for which articulation agreements would theoretically be possible.

courses across institutions we were able to more thoroughly analyze these courses for potential transferability. We structured our analysis further by deciding to first identify themes within the required courses and then pair these themes with applicable core competency areas; we worked from the outside in rather than from the inside out. This approach strengthened the analysis as it did not limit our identification of themes to the eight core competencies or force courses into one competency area or another. Seeing that five of our seven identified themes are so closely related to one or more of the core competencies shows that institutions have begun to structure their programs around the competencies.

Using the school profiles from Phase I of the project, we identified the ECE degrees at each institution and used course catalogs (available online) and Education or ECE departments' websites to identify the program-specific course requirements for each degree.   We did not focus on general education courses (e.g., Psychology 101) that were not specific to ECE. We categorized individual courses into themes by degree. There was an "other" category for courses that did not fit into a theme. Looking at the lists of courses under each theme, we were able to identify common trends in courses across institutions to include in our in-depth analysis. The seven identified themes are:

1. Introduction to Early Childhood Education
2. Growth and Development
3. Family and Community
4. Curriculum Development
5. Working with Children with Special Needs
6. Observing and Recording
7. Guidance and Discipline

Each required course that fit into one or more of the identified themes was entered into an Excel database. Required courses that did not fit into our identified course themes were not included in the database. Using course catalogs, institution and department websites, syllabi, and phone contact with IHEs, we collected information on the following characteristics of courses:[5]
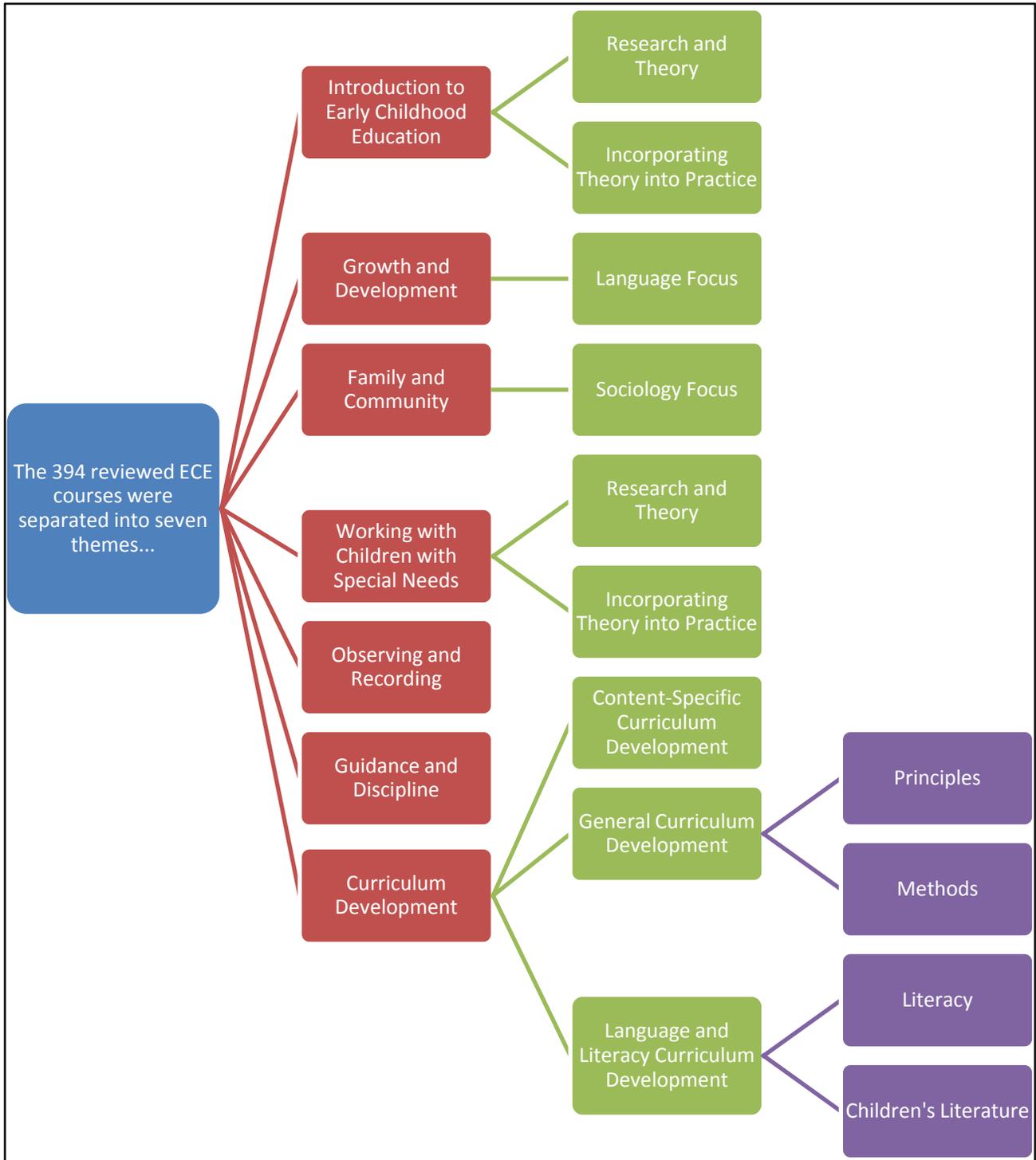
- Course title
- Course description
- Number of credits awarded for completion
- Number of contact hours required
- Course level (introduction/advanced)
- All required prerequisites
- Course structure (in person, distance learning, online)
- When in the program the course is recommended or required to be taken

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[5] These characteristics of the courses were specified in the original RFP.

Flow Chart

The diagram below maps the process we used to divide courses into themes and subthemes, and further into categories when necessary. This map corresponds to the course categorizations in the Excel databases and fact sheets.

The 394 reviewed ECE courses were separated into seven themes...

- **Introduction to Early Childhood Education**
  - Research and Theory
  - Incorporating Theory into Practice
- **Growth and Development**
  - Language Focus
- **Family and Community**
  - Sociology Focus
- **Working with Children with Special Needs**
  - Research and Theory
  - Incorporating Theory into Practice
- **Observing and Recording**
- **Guidance and Discipline**
- **Curriculum Development**
  - Content-Specific Curriculum Development
  - General Curriculum Development
    - Principles
    - Methods
  - Language and Literacy Curriculum Development
    - Literacy
    - Children's Literature

<u>Verification of Course Information and Request for Syllabi</u>

A key finding in Phase I was the importance of verifying information with IHEs as they are frequently making changes to their course catalogs and available courses. EEC also wanted to determine whether course syllabi might be a way to determine potential transferability of courses. Thus, we reserved ample time to communicate with IHEs to verify our findings around course characteristics and request select syllabi.

At the end of January, 2011 Oldham Innovative Research made first contact via email with Early Childhood Education department chairs or program heads at thirty IHEs[6]. The email included an attached letter from EEC addressed directly to the contact attesting to the validity of the project. The email briefly outlined the project, asked that they let us know who would be best to contact about the institution's ECE program(s), and that they make the professors in their department aware of the project and that we may be in touch for further course information. Sixteen IHEs responded to the initial email[7].

In the beginning of February, 2011 we contacted IHEs via email for a second time. This email asked for verification or edits to an Excel database listing the institution's courses that corresponded to the seven themes as well as to ask for syllabi for the identified courses and finally, to answer the following four questions:

1) Which courses from outside institutions are typically accepted for transfer in lieu of <u>required</u> courses?
2) Which courses from outside institutions are typically accepted for transfer in lieu of <u>elective</u> courses?
3) What are the criteria and process for accepting transfer of required and elective coursework? and
4) Are there courses at your institution for which no substitution or transfer credit is ever allowed?

<u>Determining Transferability between Courses</u>

To determine potential transferability between courses, we read course descriptions for all courses that had been identified within our seven common themes and entered into the database. Themes were broken down into subthemes when necessary. Descriptions were read by multiple staff at OIR and coded based on key phrases and course objectives. However, it is important to note that reading and categorizing these courses based on a paragraph description is subjective. To eliminate as

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[6] We were asked to include the final three school (Bay Path College, Anna Maria College, and Curry College) after our first email was sent. These three schools were contacted at a later date.

[7] The contact at Framingham State University indicated that they were not available to offer any information until after March 10, when they had completed their state review.

much subjectivity as possible, reading and coding was initially done individually. Once this step was accomplished, a team of three came together to determine which courses were similar in content and objectives. Any courses that the team agreed upon that did not align were removed from the category. At this point, each course was aligned to one or more of EEC's eight core competencies. Bringing together information from the database on individual courses and data collected and verified from contacts at IHEs, fact sheets were created based on each of the seven themes[8]. These fact sheets are more specific to transferability than the database in that the sheets only list courses that we have determined to be most likely to be transferable. Courses were excluded from fact sheets if they awarded a fewer or greater number of credits for completion than the majority of courses or if the course description did not fit within the theme or subtheme. However, it should be noted that all required courses that fit into one of our identified themes were cataloged in the database even if they were excluded from the fact sheets.

Methodological Limitations

      <u>Need for targeted methodology.</u> As the Phase II project had to be accomplished in 4 months with a limited budget, we worked with EEC at the beginning stages of the contract to target our methodology to ensure we uncovered the most useful information. Thus, we chose to focus our research on early education and care degrees and not on out-of-school-time or other related degrees. Also, we targeted our methodology on required ECE related courses within the ECE degrees.   In the initial review of courses, it was determined that including general education, elective, practicum, and seminar courses would result in an analysis and categorization of approximately 1000 courses, a number that falls beyond the scope of this project. Thus, we made the decision to include the required ECE related courses and not general education courses, electives, practicum, or seminar courses, resulting in the categorization of 394 courses.

      Related to these decisions, it is important to note that our findings **only represent trends among required courses within ECE degree programs**. IHEs offer, and possibly require, additional courses that address EEC core competencies and these courses would also be eligible for transfer among IHEs.

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[8] A fact sheet for courses specific to infant and toddlers was also created. Although these courses were initially incorporated into major themes, it was decided to dedicate a separate fact sheet to infant/toddler courses as they do not lend themselves to transferability when included in the preschool-aged objectives of the other courses.

Collection and Analysis of Syllabi. In Phase II, as specified in the original RFP, we requested course syllabi for courses under initial review. The goal was that in collecting and analyzing syllabi for course objectives, issues and topics addressed, and evaluation measures (among others variables defined in the RFP) it would lend a deeper level of analysis and in turn more credibility to recommendations of transferability. However, when we emailed IHEs asking for course syllabi, many of the people we spoke with were hesitant and others refused to share syllabi with us. As stated by multiple institutions, syllabi are considered the "intellectual property" of the professors who write them. The following quote from an early childhood education department head captures the apprehension of many:

I'm not sure if other institutions are saying the same thing, but even within my own college, faculty has been asked to turn in our syllabi to the Academic Dean so that we can offer them to hired adjunct faculty to use as a model. This has become a little bit of a contentious issue even on our own campus. How could I justify to my faculty colleagues that these syllabi are going out to an even larger audience? Another thought occurs to me. If I have a student transfer from _____, I read the course description for a Curriculum course, then I honor that course without having to review the syllabi.

We were able to collect syllabi from about half of the institutions. However, upon analysis we found that syllabi are very individualized and did not lend themselves to any deeper analysis on objective measures (e.g., course objectives vary in length from one paragraph to two pages). For example, how would one compare the merits of two different textbooks or one group of articles to another group of articles? Following this preliminary analysis of syllabi combined with the consternation of schools in providing this information, it was decided by EEC and OIR that syllabi would not be useful in this project.

Verification of IHE information. A final limitation is regarding verification of data. We did not receive verification from all IHEs that the information we collected on courses at their institutions is accurate. IHEs were given a March 16th deadline for submitting any edits to the information collected on their IHE. They were made aware that the information collected will be publically available on EEC's web site to help students navigate the potential for further education. 22 of the 33 IHEs responded to either our initial or final veritification deadline.

Course Analysis by EEC Core Competency Areas

Included in the scope of this project is the identification of EEC core competencies[9] that are consistently being addressed by early childhood education degree and certificate programs. The Commonwealth began developing core competencies in 2005 when EEC was established. They were issued in 2010. The competencies outline the necessary knowledge and skills that early educators need to have when working with children. EEC recognizes that the acquisition of these skills can come from multiple resources and at different times during educators' career. One of the goals of the MA core competencies is to "guide the development of an infrastructure of coursework and other professional development opportunities" (Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators 2010:4). In order to determine which competencies are being addressed by higher education, EEC included this step in the Phase II Mapping Project.

At the 33 IHEs included in this analysis, 17 offer one or more bachelors program in Early Childhood Education, 16 offer associates programs, and 12 offer certificate programs. As discussed earlier, from our review of required degree and certificate courses at these programs, we identified seven common course themes representing trends across the IHEs. The seven identified themes are:

1. Introduction to Early Childhood Education
2. Growth and Development
3. Family and Community
4. Curriculum Development
5. Working with Children with Special Needs
6. Observing and Recording
7. Guidance and Discipline

After an in-depth review of the courses included in these themes, our research and analysis revealed that the following five core areas of competency are strongly represented in required courses categorized within our identified course themes[10]:
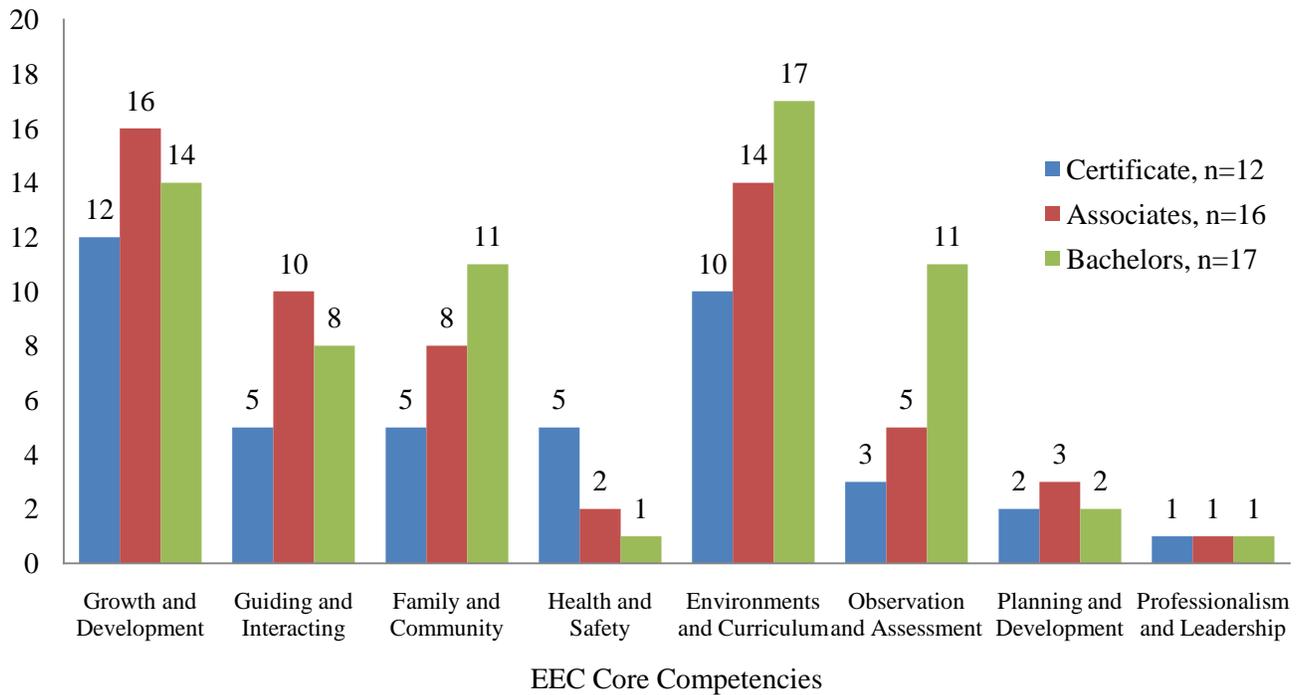
- Core Competency #1: Understanding the Growth and Development of Children and Youth
- Core Competency #2: Guiding and Interacting with Children and Youth
- Core Competency #3: Partnering with Families and Communities
- Core Competency #5: Learning Environments and Implementing Curriculum
- Core Competency #6: Observation, Assessment and Documentation

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[9] See Appendix 1 for full definitions of each EEC Core Competency
[10] While courses typically address multiple core competency areas, this analysis is based on the primary focus of the course and its closest alignment to one core competency area.

Table 3. Number of Courses Offered in EEC Core Competency Areas

EEC Core Competency	Certificate, n=12	Associates, n=16	Bachelors, n=17
Growth and Development	12	16	14
Guiding and Interacting	5	10	8
Family and Community	5	8	11
Health and Safety	5	2	1
Environments and Curriculum	10	14	17
Observation and Assessment	3	5	11
Planning and Development	2	3	2
Professionalism and Leadership	1	1	1

The following discussion of individual core competency areas explores the types of courses that are offered and the cohesiveness between the course objectives and core competency subcategories. This section will also describe gaps across institutions in addressing core competencies related to health and safety, program planning and development, and professionalism and leadership.

Core Competency #1: Understanding the Growth and Development of Children and Youth

Very strong cohesiveness between required courses and EEC core competency. Percentages of programs addressing core competency #1 in their required courses:

- ⚙ *100% of certificate programs*
- ⚙ *100% of associates programs*
- ⚙ *82% of bachelors programs*

From reviewing the required courses at the 33 two and four year institutions, it is clear that Growth and Development is a theme routinely covered in course content. All of the certificate and associates programs (100%) and 14 of the 17 bachelors programs (82%) reviewed require students to take a course related to child growth and development. When analyzing course descriptions we found

these courses to be very similar across institutions. Key concepts included in the course descriptions are:

- understanding major theories and typical stages of growth and development;
- the recognition of individual, cultural, and familial differences that effect a child's development; and
- the importance of understanding development in the context of the early childhood classroom.

These key concepts are mirrored in the description of *Core Competency #1*: "Understanding how children and youth learn, the adult's role in positively supporting individual growth and development, the implications of early brain development, and applying research and human development theories regarding children and youth" (Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators 2010:5). Although courses in this theme may address specific topics more in-depth than others (e.g., one course may focus on developmental theory while another focuses on physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and moral development), the fundamentals of the courses are consistent across IHEs. This fundamental consistency creates cohesiveness with this EEC core competency and also gives these courses potential for transferability. Course descriptions that stress the integration of child development theories in curriculum design were also mapped to *Core Competency #5, Learning Environments and Curriculum.*

Core Competency #2: Guiding and Interacting with Children and Youth

<u>Moderate cohesiveness</u> between required courses and EEC core competency. Percentages of programs addressing core competency #2 in their required courses:

- *42% of certificate programs*
- *63% of associates programs*
- *47% of bachelors programs*

A course theme we identified as <u>Guidance and Discipline</u> was closely linked to *Core Competency #2*, which stresses the importance of "using appropriate guidance techniques for specific ages and developmental stages" and "recognizing factors that impact behavior" (Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators 2010:6). These concepts are consistently addressed in course descriptions. Five out of 12 certificate (42%), 10 of the 16 associates (63%), and eight out of 17 bachelors programs (47%) require courses that fit into our categorization of guidance and

discipline courses. Looking across the IHEs, guidance and discipline courses use theories of children's behavior and interpersonal relationships to examine appropriate guidance and problem solving techniques. They recommend strategies to foster positive behavior in the classroom. The courses in this theme give teachers practical skills for the classroom. Some courses also relate to *Core Competency #5, Learning Environments and Curriculum* by addressing the importance of a positive and respectful learning environment that encourages children to manage their behaviors.

Core Competency #3: Partnering with Families and Communities

<u>Moderate cohesiveness</u> between required courses and EEC core competency. Percentages of programs addressing core competency #3 in their required courses:

- *42% of certificate programs*
- *50% of associates programs*
- *65% of bachelors programs*

Of the 17 bachelors programs we examined, 11 (65%) require courses that address the impact that family and community have in an early childhood education environment. Eight of the 16 associates (50%) and five of the 12 certificate programs (42%) require courses related to families and communities. With our analysis of course descriptions, we categorized courses in the Family and Community theme if they incorporate cultural, social, linguistic, familial, and ethnic diversity into the classroom. These courses typically address the importance of improving communication skills, building partnerships, collaborating, and increasing awareness of and sensitivity to differences. Courses in this theme are aligned with *Core Competency #3's* subcategories and summary statements. Some courses also connect to *Core Competency #5 Learning Environments and Curriculu*m in their focus on the creation of a classroom that incorporates diversity of families, communities, and cultures into its curriculum and environment.

Courses teaching the different aspects of planning, designing, and implementing an effective curriculum in a positive learning environment are widespread across all early childhood education programs. 10 of the 12 certificate (83%), 14 of the 16 associates (88%), and all of the bachelors programs (100%) require a course or courses in Curriculum Development. After reviewing the required courses at all programs, we structured our analysis around three types of curriculum courses: 1) General Curriculum Development, which was then further specified into Principles and Methods of curriculum development; 2) Language and Literacy Curriculum Development, which looked at courses focused around reading, writing, and literacy, and was further specified into Literacy and Children's Literature; and 3) Content-Specific Curriculum Development which focused on specific subject areas (e.g., math, science) and often use the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks to shape the structure of the course. The array of content-specific courses at the bachelors level and the limited number in associates and certificate programs revealed a distinction between the types of courses required at two and four year institutions. Since bachelors programs have a longer timeframe in which studen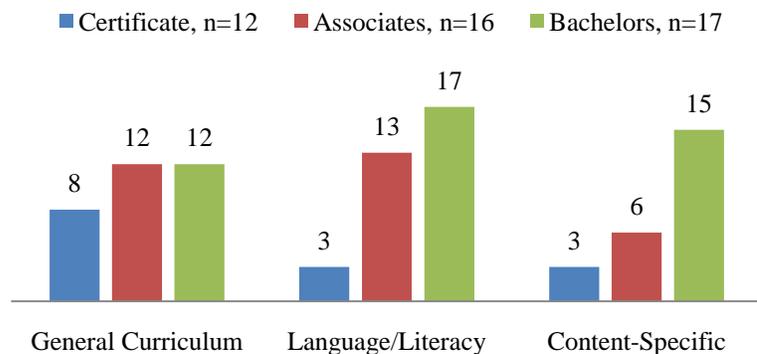ts study and since four year schools are working to offer unique ECE programs, bachelors degree programs require the largest number of curriculum based courses. While associate and certificate programs require some content-specific courses, the shorter timeframe and structured program of study does not allow for much specificity within curriculum design.

Table 4. Number of Programs Requiring Curriculum Courses by Sub-Theme

Legend: ■ Certificate, n=12 ■ Associates, n=16 ■ Bachelors, n=17

General Curriculum: Certificate 8, Associates 12, Bachelors 12
Language/Literacy: Certificate 3, Associates 13, Bachelors 17
Content-Specific: Certificate 3, Associates 6, Bachelors 15

We have mapped all three subthemes of curriculum courses to EEC *Core Competency #5*. The courses we reviewed strongly support this core competency's statement that teachers must have an "understanding of developmentally appropriate curriculum model that prepares children and youth for success in school" (Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators 2010:6). However, the full text of the competency, "recognizing characteristics of high quality environments and utilizing strategies such as: consistent schedules and routines, transition activities for moving from one activity to another, interesting materials and activities appropriate by age group, and arranging a classroom to enhance children's learning" is not uniformly covered in the course content. While some of these skills are addressed (e.g., materials and activities), course descriptions do not speak to the other aspects of this statement (e.g. schedules and routines, and transitions). Another finding of note is that many courses that are primarily mapped to other core competencies also address the curriculum core competency.[11] This suggests that institutions are using skills students learn in one course and integrating them into multiple aspects of their early childhood programs.

General Curriculum Development: 12 of the 17 bachelors (71%), 12 of the 16 associates (75%), and 8 of the 12 certificate programs (67%) require students to take general introductory curriculum development courses. We further delineate these courses as Principles or Methods courses, depending on whether or not the course discusses the ways to develop a curriculum (Principles) or leads students through the actual development and implementation (Methods). These courses discuss the historical, theoretical, and practical aspects of designing and implementing an early childhood curriculum. They provide the foundation for more in-depth study of the individual curricular areas of language arts, math, science, and social studies. Many of the bachelor's level courses introduce students to the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework.

Language and Literacy Curriculum Development: Language and literacy is a content-specific area that was found to be a trend in required courses at both the bachelors and associates level. All of the bachelors (100%), 13 of the 16 associates (81%), and 3 of the 12 certificate (25%) programs require courses related to language and literacy curriculum design. Because of the large number of courses, we further divided this area into courses that specifically focus on building children's Literacy skills and Children's Literature courses. We defined literacy courses as those that focus on literacy skills such as reading, writing, phonics, and vocabulary development. Children's Literature courses are a clearly defined trend across IHEs and one that may lend itself easily to transferability.

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[11] The comprehensive course database lists the core competencies that have been mapped to individual courses.

Content-Specific Curriculum Development: More advanced curriculum based courses provide students with the skills to implement subject-specific programs, such as math, science, and language arts. These courses are often based around the state-defined content area guidelines for each subject. Although bachelor's level programs require an array on content-specific courses, associate and certificate program course offerings are more limited, most likely due to time limitations. Only six associates programs (38%) require content-specific courses in math, science, or the creative curriculum, as compared to 15 of the 17 bachelors programs (88%). Only three certificate programs (25%) require more content-specific courses, all of which are focused on the role of creativity in the classroom.

Core Competency #6: Observation, Assessment, and Documentation

<u>Moderate cohesiveness</u> between required courses and EEC core competency. Percentages of programs addressing core competency #6 in their required courses:

- *25% of certificate programs*
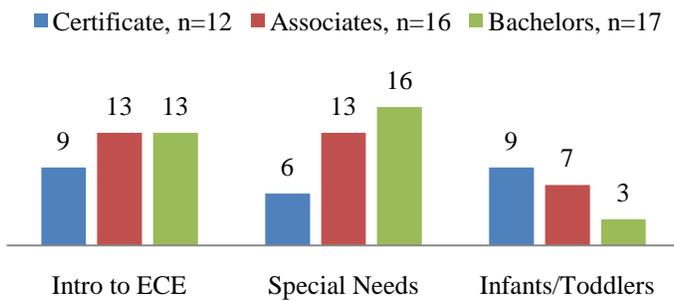- *31% of associates programs*
- *65% of bachelors programs*

The importance of observation, assessment, and documentation in early childhood classrooms was clear when reviewing bachelor's program courses. 11 of the 17 programs (65%) require courses in this area. Interestingly, only 5 associates (31%) and 3 certificate programs (25%) require courses specifically addressing the theme designated as <u>Observing and Recording</u>. This is a dominant theme within bachelors programs. Since many grants and funding sources for early childhood programs require knowledge of observation and recording (e.g. QRIS), this may be an area for potential growth for two year institutions. It could also be an area for increased transferability across institutions if more courses are offered at the two year level over time. In reviewing course descriptions within the observing and recording theme, we found a strong correspondence between course objectives and core competency objectives. Both stress the importance of incorporating observation, assessment, and documentation into multiple aspects of the early childhood classroom to meet the individual needs of children. Some courses also address appropriate ways for working with families during the assessment process. Although we have identified a separate theme titled <u>Working with Children with Special Needs</u>, many of those courses have also been mapped to *Core Competency #6* as they mirror the objectives.

Additional Course Themes

Outside of the five themes that are mapped to one of the core competencies, we found three other groupings of course offerings that were common across institutions: those relating to (1) Introduction to Early Childhood Education, (2) Working with Children with Special Needs, and (3) Infants and Toddlers. Although these themes do not directly align with one core competency area, as do the other identified themes, they were found to be common course trends that have a high potential for transferability. It is not expected that courses related to infants/toddlers or children with special needs would align to one core competency area since these subjects are imbedded throughout the competency areas.

Table 5. Number of Programs Requiring Courses in Additional Themes

■ Certificate, n=12 ■ Associates, n=16 ■ Bachelors, n=17

	Intro to ECE	Special Needs	Infants/Toddlers
Certificate	9	6	9
Associates	13	13	7
Bachelors	13	16	3

The Introduction to Early Childhood Education courses are extensive across IHEs; 13 of the 17 bachelors (76%), 13 of the 16 associates (81%), and 9 of the 12 certificate programs (75%) require students to take an introduction to ECE course. These courses appear to offer an overview of all core competencies, as they provide the foundation for these programs. We were able to delineate courses as focused either on Research and Theory or the Incorporation of Theory into Practice. Research and theory courses address ECE from a macro level, focusing on theories and philosophies of ECE and how they shape the development of the field. These courses provide a comprehensive view of programs, including the history of early education and an exploration of terminology, issues, trends, law, and societal premises. Incorporating theory into practice courses address the theoretical background of ECE, but also focus on micro level skills and practices for teaching in an early childhood classroom, including developmentally appropriate practice, incorporating family and community, and observation and individualization techniques.

Courses that focus on Working with Children with Special Needs are also common across institutions; 16 of the 17 bachelors (94%), 13 of the 16 associates (81%), and 6 of the 12 certificate programs (50%) require courses on special needs. Much like the introduction to ECE courses, we categorized these courses into two subcategories: Research and Theory or the Incorporation of Theory into Practice. Research and theory courses focus on background knowledge, research, and theories about the different types of special needs in the classroom, such as learning disabilities and

developmental delays. Incorporating theory into practice courses examine the teachers' role in creating an inclusionary classroom with appropriate practices and intervention techniques for working with individual children's needs. As discussed earlier, some of the courses addressing special needs are mapped to *Core Competency #6: Observation, Assessment, and Documentation*. Courses that focus on the study of origin, diagnosis, and treatment of special needs were not clearly connected to special needs in the context of early childhood education and thus were not paired to a core competency.

A final categorization of courses was determined to be Infants and Toddlers; 3 of the 17 bachelors (18%), 7 of the 16 associates (44%), and 9 of the 12 certificate programs (75%) require these courses. Although this category of courses may lend itself to transferability simply because of the specified age range, we further categorized these courses based on objectives indicated in course descriptions. Introduction to Infant/Toddler Care are courses that address multiple aspects of caring for infants and toddlers, including development, health and safety, learning environments, and family involvement. Infant and toddler Growth and Development courses specifically focus on the physical and emotional growth and development process from birth to three years. Curriculum courses focus on creating a developmentally appropriate curriculum for infants and toddlers. The final subcategory, Development and Curriculum, are courses that incorporate the study of infant and toddler development into the design of an appropriate curriculum. Infant and toddler courses are separated from others due to their specificity; however individual courses are mapped to core competencies depending on learning objectives.

Gaps across IHEs

Core Competency #4: Health, Safety and Nutrition

Limited cohesiveness between required courses and EEC core competency. Percentages of programs addressing core competency #4 in their required courses:

- *42% of certificate programs*
- *13% of associates programs*
- *6% of bachelors programs*

Core Competency #7: Program Planning and Development

Very limited cohesiveness between required courses and EEC core competency. Percentages of programs addressing core competency #7 in their required courses:

- *17% of certificate programs*
- *19% of associates programs*
- *12% of bachelors programs*

Core Competency #8: Professionalism and Leadership

Very limited cohesiveness between required courses and EEC core competency. Percentages of programs addressing core competency #8 in their required courses:

- *8% of certificate programs*
- *6% of associates programs*
- *6% of bachelors programs*

Five of the eight EEC core competency areas are being adequately addressed at the programs we analyzed within 33 IHEs. Three core competencies, however, do not appear to have been incorporated extensively into *required* courses[12]: *#4 Health, Safety, and Nutrition; #7 Program Planning and Development*; and *#8 Professionalism and Leadership*. Recognizing that required courses at these institutions do not appear to be directly addressing these three core competencies can lead to development in two key areas: the incorporation of courses that address these core competencies into program requirements at IHEs, and the implementation of professional development and pre/in-service training around these themes.

Moving forward with the analysis that was completed in this study, the identification of these gaps can help direct attention to the development and/or implementation of required courses within IHEs related to these three core competencies. However, from our discussions with IHEs involved in this

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[12] While these competencies are not well covered in required courses, it is possible that other types of course, such as practicums and electives, are covering these areas. It would require further study to determine the veracity of this postulation.

project, we learned that institutions are limited on the number and variety of courses they can offer due to stringent NAEYC and NCATE certification and state requirements, among other institutional requirements. This is particularly true at the two year level, as voiced to us by a department chair and professor at a two year school: "*Our programs are so tight now, and do not have any free elective courses...For the transfer program, it is even tighter with very specific courses that will transfer to a 4 year school.*" IHEs seem to be torn between working on meeting the needs of their students and the requirements of the state. Another department head: "*We are limited to how many courses we can offer. We are directed by our students needing employment and the requirements from the state, especially at the two year level.*" It is important for the EEC to recognize this struggle when working with IHEs to develop ways for IHEs to address and incorporate these three core competencies into their programs.

One of the main goals of the core competencies is to "provide educators with a framework for professional development- a road map- leading them to new credentials, or guiding ongoing professional development at various career stages" (Core Competencies for Early Education and Care and Out-of-School Time Educators 2010:3). Although these eight areas define the necessary skills and knowledge that early educators need to have when working with children, it does not necessarily mean that educators must gain all of these skills in higher education as there are other professional development options available.

In the discussion of the gap in coverage of these three core competency areas, it is important to keep in mind that due to the scope of this project our analysis did not include practicum and seminar courses. These content rich and discussion-based courses may be addressing these core competencies. In a cursory analysis of a random group of practicum and seminar course descriptions we were able to pull out common key terms and course objectives clearly related to professionalism and leadership: "expand professional competencies," "extend their understanding of the teacher's responsibility," "reflect on their teaching practice," and "examine many of the roles of the professional early childhood educator." Since one practicum course has now been included in the ECE Compact, and seeing the potential for competencies to being addressed in these courses, an analysis of the substance of practicum and seminar courses may be a crucial next step. As one department head said, "*Practicums are the core of what we do.*" Recognizing that these three core competency areas are not consistently being addressed in higher education is a finding that needs further research in order to determine how best institutions and the EEC can work together to help early educators meet these professional development goals.

Analysis of Course Transferability

Community colleges, universities, and state colleges were asked the same four questions regarding course transferability: 1) which courses from outside institutions are typically accepted for transfer in lieu of required courses? 2) which courses from outside institutions are typically accepted for transfer in lieu of elective courses? 3) what are the criteria and process for accepting transfer of required and elective coursework? and 4) are there courses at your institution for which no substitution or transfer credit is ever allowed?

Courses accepted from outside institutions in lieu of required courses

Based on responses from 12 community colleges that offer associates programs and 12 colleges/universities that offer bachelors programs, some common variables emerged in terms of course transferability for required courses. Only one IHE was able to provide a list of the exact courses that transferred; others reflected on the general criteria for transferability. There is no universal answer to the question of course transferability. Course transferability is an individual institution decision based on multiple factors. Some of the common variables in transferring required courses that were indicated by the twenty-four institutions interviewed were:

- a review of the **content of the course,** which typically includes a transcript review, an examination of the course descriptions, one-on-one discussions with individual students about courses and if necessary, a review of syllabi;
- whether or not the credits obtained were from an **accredited institution;**
- a **grade of a C or better** in courses that were deemed transferable;
- certain **foundational/introductory courses** (e.g., Introduction to Early Childhood Education, Child Growth and Development) were accepted for credit, many of which are outlined in articulation agreements; and
- the possibility of prior coursework **being counted as an elective.**

Example Provided for Bachelors Program

"Core requirements (introductory level) courses are generally accepted for transfer. There are a core set of requirements for both licensure and non-licensure majors. They are…CORE REQUIREMENTS: Child Development, Educational Psychology, Strategies for the Effective Educator, Children with Special Needs. Additionally, some lower level/introductory courses within concentrations are also accepted often with approval from the undergraduate education coordinator. They are…CONCENTRATION REQUIRMENTS: Infants and Toddlers (non-licensure), Early Childhood Language Arts and Literacy (w/approval), Guiding Behavior (non-licensure), School Family and Community (non-licensure)."

Courses accepted from outside institutions in lieu of elective courses

In eight out of 24 cases, the process for accepting electives is the same process as required courses in that the courses are scrutinized in a variety of ways to determine comparability. Elective courses are more difficult to determine transferability because institutions have to consider different components: 1) the type of course and distribution area. (e.g., electives in social sciences and humanities may be considered for credit but a course in business may not); 2) how general the elective is and whether or not it can easily be applied to early childhood education, and; 3) whether or not the elective would then transfer to four-year institutions if that were the student's plan. Again, a common attribute that is examined is the content of the course and comparability to other courses. As with the required courses, the process for considering transferability of electives is an individual process.

Example Provided by Community College

"We currently have agreement with several area high schools for student to enter the program with one completed course."

A notable trend across two year colleges is the inability to offer elective courses in associate and certificate programs because there is limited time due to the strict requirements for NAEYC accredidation and the Massachusetts Transfer Compact.

Example Provided by Bachelors Program

"There are some choices among clusters of courses. In our Liberal Arts and Sciences (LA&S) courses, transfers may also use General Psychology to fulfill the psychology requirement instead of our LA&S Human Growth and Development. Some LA&S science lab courses are accepted, not because they have similar content, but rather because they are relevant courses for early childhood."

Criteria for acceptance of transfers

The criteria and process for accepting transfer of required and elective coursework is very individualized from institution to institution with some common characteristics. When considering transfers, it is important to note that institutions recognized that several steps are involved in the process and that it involves several departments within the institution (e.g., Registrar, Admissions, Advising office).

For two-year colleges offering associate and certificate programs, the most common processes of accepting transfers included: decisions made by the offices of the registrar, admissions, or advising in conjunction with department heads or Deans, an evaluation of transcripts, and an evaluation of the

course by looking at course descriptions. Other processes mentioned were ensuring that the credits obtained were from an accredited institution, whether or not the course was a three-credit course, and whether or not the student received a grade of a C or better.

For four-year colleges offering bachelors programs, the process was notably more complex and institutionalized. As with two year colleges the process often included the offices of the registrar, admissions, or advising as well as input from department heads and Deans. Other regular procedures were to utilize the articulation agreement with community colleges (where it is clearly specified which courses can be transferred), and a careful analysis of the transcript and/or courses. Individual advisory meetings with students are also often part of the transfer process.

> **Example Provided by Community College**
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> "The student first meets with transfer counselor and they see which courses match up with ours. Then I sit down and meet with them. If majority of the course content matches, it's fine. I try not to make it hard for students. If they have the background, and I can tell, I accept the course."

> **An Example Provided by Bachelors Program**
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> "All transfer student records are evaluated by the Registrar's Office and a transfer evaluation form is completed. Transfer evaluation determines which courses fulfill the college's central Liberal Arts requirements (often referred to as General Education/Core College requirements) as well as the student's major. The transfer evaluation is then sent to the Advising Office to assist them in advising/counseling the student and to create a schedule for the student. The Advising Office also reviews the transfer evaluation for possible additional transfer credits. The Undergraduate Education Coordinator also reviews the student record and transfer evaluation for all transfer students pursuing an education major (licensure and non-licensure)."

Cases in which transfers are not allowed

Coursework or credits that are not typically transferable that were commonly noted included:

- Practicum placements, field work, and/or student teaching
- Specialized theory courses especially if they are connected to student teaching or practicum experiences
- Courses that are outdated and not considered relevant to current research and standards
- Courses from other disciplines especially those that were discipline-specific (e.g., business courses)
- Upper-level curriculum courses that are more specialized in a topic

- If a student is in the licensure track of a bachelors program, courses beyond foundational level are not transferable

There were instances when institutions noted that they would sometimes looks carefully at course to see if credits could be given for electives.

An Example Provided by Bachelors Program

"We typically do not accept equivalencies for SPED 203 Cultural Diversity Issues in School and Society, ECPK 320 Language Development and Early Literacy (Pre K-K), ECPK 321 Project-Based, Standards-Rich Learning in Early Childhood (Pre K-K), or ECPK 322 Observation and Assessment in Early Childhood (Pre K-K). We never accept equivalencies for ECPK 490 Mentored Program Observation (Pre K-K) or ECPK 492 Mentored Performance Fieldwork II (Pre K-K)."

Relationship of Findings to the Early Childhood Education Compact

Similar to the IHE Mapping Project, an overarching goal of the revised 2011 Early Childhood Education Compact is to ease the process for degree completion at state colleges and universities in the Massachusetts higher education system[13]. The Compact, which is in alignment with the *MassTransfer* policy, focuses on assisting students who are seeking an approved early childhood licensure or non-licensure degree by linking students who have completed an approved associates degree to a baccalaureate program. The Department of Higher Education's development and subsequent revisions of the Compact shows their commitment and leadership around the transfer of credits within the higher education system.

Phase II of the Mapping Project ties into the Compact when looking at the academic requirements. To ensure that students are entering bachelors programs with a sound and consistent foundation from the associates programs, the Compact outlines course requirement for both general education courses and courses specific to early childhood education. Our findings align with the course requirements of the Compact; in our independent examination of required courses we found common course themes that are closely aligned with the ECE specific course requirements for the Compact. Our findings bolster the applicability and relevance of the Compact and suggest that IHEs should not have to make major changes or additions to their program requirements in order for the Compact to be successful at their schools. As noted in the revised Compact, a cross agency coordinating committee will assist campuses in developing courses that meet the ESE and EEC core content knowledge requirements. Our findings can be used by the coordinating committee in conversations with IHEs. In

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[13] The Early Childhood Education Compact only applies to state schools.

addition, this project provides evidence of transferability between select private and public schools, which may help extend transferability beyond the public IHEs that the Compact supports. This has the potential to expand students' options for a clear pathway toward achievement of a degree in early childhood education.

<u>Overall Findings/Themes</u>

From OIR's work on phase one and two of this project, we have learned that the transferability of courses between institutions is currently functioning as more of an art than a science, with many of the decisions being made on an individual basis by an individual with limited protocols directing decisions. It was described to us as an ongoing conversation between students and institutions and institutions and the state. Ideas are pitched, and policies and procedures are developed and altered, all in the hope of easing the transfer process for students and resulting in the creation of a high quality, educated workforce in the Massachusetts early childhood sector. In conducting this course analysis and alignment research, we now have an idea of what this art looks like from the outside. We still do not know what it looks like from the inside, but our hope is that this project leads to efforts to align the inside with the outside by making the art a bit more of a science. This study has helped to identify specific core competency areas around which energy can be focused to align internal protocols and support transferability. Findings from this project should be used as a guide, not a rule, in continuing the notable work of all parties involved in easing the process of course transferability.

<u>Findings Related to Course Analysis and Core Competency Areas</u>

1. When reviewing required early childhood education courses at the 33 IHEs, we categorized courses by themes. From our categorization, we found clear alignment and cohesiveness with five of the eight EEC core competency areas. Our identification of common course themes and their alignment with the Core Competencies illustrates areas that have the most potential for transferability. The following are the competencies in which we found cohesiveness with required courses:
   a. Core Competency #1: Understanding the Growth and Development of Children and Youth
   b. Core Competency #2: Guiding and Interacting with Children and Youth
   c. Core Competency #3: Partnering with Families and Communities

d. Core Competency #5: Learning Environments and Implementing Curriculum

    e. Core Competency #6: Observation, Assessment, and Documentation

2. Two common course themes, <u>Introduction to Early Childhood Education</u> and <u>Working with Children with Special Needs,</u> are aligned with multiple core competencies. Although they are not tied to only one area of competency, there is also good transferability across these themes.

3. Even with the alignment to *Core Competency Area #5,* transferability may be more complex for the curriculum courses because of the specificity of the course subject, from math and science curriculum development to curriculum courses that focus on specific philosophical appraches.

4. Three EEC core competencies are not consistently represented in required courses. EEC can use this finding to encourage IHEs to incorporate courses that address these core competencies into their list of required courses.

    a. Core Competency #4: Health, Safety, and Nutrition

    b. Core Competency #7: Program Planning and Development

    c. Core Competency #8: Professionalism and Leadership

5. Required courses for associates and certificate degrees are generally more similar to each other than they are to courses in bachelor programs. This is likely related to the short, concentrated timeframe and focus of the associates and certificate ECE programs. This results in many courses being easily transferable between certificate and associates degrees. Bachelors degree programs are likely purposely distinct and unique considering their desire to attract students from a limited pool of potential students. Additionally, with four years worth of courses, bachelors programs can afford to offer distinct and unique courses that likely do not lend themselves to being transferred to other institutions.

<u>Findings Related to Course Transferability</u>

Although IHEs have policies and procedures around transferability, transfer of credits is individualized; it is a site and often student specific, bureaucratic process dependent upon several variables, and often involving several academic departments. In reviewing responses from 24 department heads from the institutions in this study, we were able to identify some trends:

1. When IHEs are considering transferability, they tend to look at:

    a. transcripts, often including a review by the registrar, admissions, advising, and education department;

b. the content of the course, which typically includes a transcript review, an examination of the course descriptions, one-on-one discussions with individual students about courses and if necessary, a review of syllabi;

c. whether or not the credits obtained were from an accredited institution; and

d. whether the student achieved a grade of a C or better in courses that were deemed transferable.

2. Certain foundational/introductory courses (e.g., Introduction to Early Childhood Education, Child Growth and Development) are accepted for credit. Many of these courses are outlined in articulation agreements.

3. If institutions do not allow transfer credits for a required course, they are likely to offer counting the credits toward an elective.

4. Syllabi are not a clear indicator of transferability. A review of syllabi did not provide useful information when looking at systemic transferability. This type of in-depth review could be more appropriate on an individual basis when department heads are meeting with students to determine whether or not a specific course is transferable.

5. Articulation agreements are helpful in determining what specific courses are transferable. Agreements are transparent to the student and advisor. This process works especially well in the public sector. In the private sector more autonomous decisions are made around transferability, which are not always clear to the student up front.

6. Course descriptions are the most effective method for determining transferability. We found this trend in responses from IHEs as well as in our own analysis of courses.

7. Course numbers are not a clear indicator of transferability.

8. Teacher licensure plays a large role in transferability for those majoring in Early Childhood Education. If a student is on the licensure track the transfer of courses and/or credits is more unlikely than if in the non-licensure ECE track. The view is that for those in the licensure track more specialized coursework is needed in order for professionals to adequately provide education in the public school arena (K-2).

Recommendations/Considerations

Using the fact sheets and findings from Phases I and II as a guide, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, the Department of Higher Education, and representatives from the IHEs included in this study can continue conversations to look at the potential for greater transferability between institutions. We recognize that within both IHEs and state agencies, including the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, people have been working diligently on this the credit transfer process across higher education. We hope that a combination of both their enduring efforts and our concentrated study will lead to continuity in this process.

Findings from these projects can be used in multiple arenas. Based on the evidence collected and the overall findings, the following recommendations and/or considerations for action and research steps were developed:

1. Continue to work with private and public IHEs to increase transferability of courses across those institutions.

2. Use information from this project to bolster the reasons for state IHEs to comply with ECE Transfer Compact.

3. Look at the three core competency areas that are not being addressed to determine if and if so how early educators are gaining the skills for these competencies. This finding can guide future professional development or course development.

4. Place an emphasis on conversations related to transferability between two- and four-year institutions as there is less consistency in transfer polices despite state initiatives. Related to this, further explore the evidence to address the misconception that students who are transferring in credits from two-year colleges are not adequately prepared as future teachers who may be working in Kindergarten through second grade.

5. Build upon best practices being used at some IHEs to clearly explain to students which courses transfer and which are required to be taken at the particular IHE (e.g., practices in place at Bridgewater State).

6. Continue to include IHEs in the development of this process. Continue to gather IHEs concerns and innovations to build buy-in and increase the likelihood of compliance and appreciation of efforts to increase transferability between courses.

7. Examine elective courses for transferability and alignment with core competencies.

8. Examine practicum courses for transferability and alignment with core competencies. This is especially important now that one practicum course is included in the ECE Compact.

9. Consider including students in the development of the credit transfer process. Consider gathering students' opinions on usability of information provided on EEC's website and in working with IHEs on course transfer.

10. Continue the current work and collaboration between IHEs, the Department of Higher Education (DHE), and EEC regarding best practices and protocols of course transferability between two- and four-year institutions. Consider distributing a survey to the multiple parties involved in the credit transfer process (including students, faculty/administration at IHEs, members of DHE and EEC) to identify best practices and protocols that currently exist. If not already being implemented or considered by DHE and EEC, and depending on survey results, some suggestions of protocol to consider include:

    a. samples of articulation agreements that work
    b. how to conduct a fair, objective course and/or transcript reviews
    c. what to ask students during an advising session on transferability
    d. differences in transferring credits/courses in licensure vs. non-licensure track
    e. how to work with registrar, admissions, and/or advising departments

Appendix 1: Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Core Competency Definitions

Competency Area 1: Understanding the Growth and Development of Children and Youth

Early care and education and out-of-school time educators must understand and be able to articulate the typical stages of growth and development (developmental milestones) and individual and developmental variations. These variations include experience, health, cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and communication strengths and abilities as well as the many factors that can influence the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth of all children and youth.

It is critical for educators to know and be able to apply commonly accepted research and development theories regarding children and youth, the implications of early brain development, the understanding of how children and youth learn; and the adult's role in positively supporting individual growth and development. Educators must know how to create safe, nurturing, and challenging learning environments that encompass developmentally appropriate practices, establish foundations for future growth, and engage young people in building social skills and knowledge.

Competency Area 2: Guiding and Interacting with Children and Youth

Early care and education and out-of-school time educators need to have realistic and developmentally appropriate expectations regarding the behavior of children and youth and understand developmentally appropriate guidance techniques. Educators are responsible for knowledge of factors that may impact behavior and implement strategies to support children and youth develop self-regulation, self-concept, coping mechanisms, self-comfort skills, and positive interactions with their peers and adults.

Competency Area 3: Partnering with Families and Communities

Building respectful, reciprocal relationships through a shared understanding with families and cultivating meaningful family and community involvement is critical. Early care and education and out-of-school time educators must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of parents as a child's first teacher, diverse family structures, and influences that enable educators to positively support and communicate with individual children and families. This includes implementing culturally competent practices, knowing about and connecting families to community resources, and keeping abreast of opportunities for appropriate, positive collaborations with other family, school, and community services.

Competency Area 4: Health, Safety, and Nutrition

Young children and youth's physical and emotional health and safety is vital for fostering competence in all developmental areas. Early care and education and out-of-school time educators must understand and be able to ensure children and youth's safety, promote sound health practices, recognize and respond to child abuse and neglect, and provide nutritious meals and snacks. This includes knowledge of a broad array of prevention, preparedness, and implementation of health and safety practices. Educators must be able to communicate information regarding children and youth's health and safety to families while maintaining confidentiality.

Competency Area 5: Learning Environments and Implementing Curriculum

Early care and education and out-of-school time educators need to understand and utilize strategies that are characteristic of high quality environments such as consistent schedules and routines, transition activities for moving from one activity or place to another, offering interesting materials and activities appropriate by age group, and how to arrange a classroom to enhance children's learning. They must know, understand and be familiar with a variety of developmentally appropriate curriculum models, as well as state expectations to prepare children and youth for school.

Competency Area 6: Observation, Assessment, and Documentation

Well prepared educators understand the goals, benefits, and uses of observation and assessment in early childhood and out-of-school time environments and how to use this information to adapt the program to meet the needs of each child in care. Systematic observations, documentation, and other effective and appropriate assessment strategies in partnership with families and other professionals serving the same children positively impacts the development and learning of those children and youth

Competency Area 7: Programming Planning and Development

Early education and care and out-of-school time educators need to understand the importance of relationships and positive communication among colleagues, especially those working together to create a nurturing learning environment for children and youth. Additionally, program managers must understand planning, organizing, and implementing best business practices. Developing a shared understanding with staff and families of regulations, applicable laws, policies, staff supervision and quality standards and how to meet regulations and standards is essential to quality environments for children. Management should support staff and serve as role models in regard to professional development plans, building healthy relationships with colleagues and families, providing developmentally appropriate practices, and connecting with and utilizing resources.

Competency Area 8: Professionalism and Leadership

Early education and care and out-of-school time educators know and use ethical guidelines and other professional standards related to their practice. They are continuous, collaborative learners who demonstrate and share knowledge, who reflect on and have a critical perspective of their work, make informed decisions, and integrate knowledge from a variety of sources. They are role models and advocates for best educational practices and policies.

Appendix 2: Required Qualifications and Professional Preparation Standards Crosswalk

Required Qualifications in Programs for Children from Birth to Age 5

EEC Licensing Regulations (QRIS Level 1)		QRIS Staff Qualifications			Early Head Start Teacher Qualifications	Head Start Aide/Assistant Qualifications	Head Start Teacher Qualifications	NAEYC Teacher Qualifications for Accreditation
Teacher	Lead Teacher	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4				
100% of groups /rooms must have a teacher with: 21 **or** high school /GED; 3 college credits in child development **AND** supervised work experience (9 mos. with high school; 3 mos. with associate degree)	*Must have a lead teacher for every 40 children of program capacity with:* 21 and high school/GED; 3 college credits in child development; 3 credits in curriculum, program planning or behavior management for preschool (or 3 credits in infant-toddler education for infant-toddler); and 6 credits in ECE categories of study (except administration) or CDA. **AND** supervised work experience: High school needs 36 mos. CDA needs 27 mos. AA needs 18 mos. BA needs 9 mos. Unrelated BA needs 18 mos. ** 4 CEUs may substitute for one 3 credit college course other than child development.*	*All staff have:* high school diploma/GED and 3 college credits in ECE or related field* *50% of classrooms have educator with:* bachelors degree or higher who works for the full program day **Staff must meet QRIS Level 1 first which requires 3 credits in child development for teachers and lead teachers*	*75% of classrooms have educator with:* a bachelor's degree or higher who work for the full program day	*100% of classrooms have educator with:* a bachelor's degree or higher who work for the full program day, minimum of 30 credits in ECE or related field	*Current requirements:* CDA or equivalent within 1 year of hire. *By Sept. 30,2010:* CDA **AND** be trained (or have equivalent coursework) in early childhood development *By Sept. 30, 2012:* CDA **AND** be trained (or have equivalent coursework) in EC development with a focus on infants and toddlers	*By Sept. 30, 2013, 100% of aides/ assistants in centers must have:* CDA **OR** Enrolled in CDA to finish in 2 yrs. **OR** AA, BA or advanced degree in any field or enrolled in a degree program	*By Oct. 1, 2011, 100% of classrooms must have a teacher with:* Associate, bachelor, or advanced degree in ECE **OR** ECE or related associate, bachelor, or advanced degree and coursework equivalent to major with teaching experience **OR** Bachelor or advanced degree in any field and coursework equivalent to ECE and teaching experience **OR** Bachelor degree in any field and admittance to Teach America program… *By Sept. 30, 2013, 50% of teachers nationwide must have:* ECE or related bachelors or advanced degree and coursework equivalent to major with teaching experience **OR** Bachelors or advanced degree in any field and coursework equivalent to ECE and teaching experience	*75% of teachers must have:* a CDA or equivalent **OR** Working on Associate's degree or higher in ECE or related field with concentration in ECE or equivalent **OR** Associate's degree or higher in unrelated field and 3 or more years experience in NAEYC accredited program **OR** Associate's degree or higher in unrelated field and 3 or more years experience in non-accredited program and 30 hours of relevant training in past 3 years

Analysis:
- EEC's qualifications for teachers in centers are less than the Head Start teacher qualifications that will take effect October 2011.
- EEC lead teachers with early childhood or a related AA or BA degrees align with the Head Start teacher qualifications. However, EEC regulations do not require a lead teacher in every classroom.
- EEC lead teachers with a CDA or an AA or BA in early childhood or a related field align with the qualifications for teachers in a NAEYC accredited program but EEC regulations do not require that 75% of the teaching staff have these qualifications.
- EEC infant/toddler lead teacher qualifications exceed those Early Head Start teachers.
- Head Start qualifications for October 2011 are more appropriately aligned with QRIS Level s 2- 4.

Professional Preparation Standards, EEC Core Competency Areas, EEC Categories of Study, and the Themes Identified by the IHE Study

EEC Core Competency Areas	EEC Regulations: Categories of Study *(Teachers, lead teachers, and directors are required to have courses in specified categories.)*	NAEYC Program Standards for Associate's Degrees *(through Spring 2013)* http://208.118.177.216/faculty/pdf/2003.pdf	IHE Phase II Study – Required Coursework Analysis				
			Identified Course Theme Areas	2-Year Institutions		4-Year Institutions	
				Number Offering Theme	Number Courses in Theme	Number Offering Theme	Number Courses in Theme
1: Understanding the growth and development of children and youth	#1 Child Growth and Development Birth – 8 years	1: Promoting Child Development and Learning	Growth and Development	16 (100%)	20	13 (76%)	19
2: Guiding and interacting with children and youth	#4 Child and Classroom Management	1: Promoting Child Development and Learning 4: Teaching and Learning	Guidance and Discipline	10 (63%)	11	8 (47%)	8
3: Partnering with families and communities	#9 Families and Communities	2: Building family and community relationships 4: Teaching and Learning	Family and Community	8 (50%)	11	11 (65%)	16
4: Health, safety, and nutrition	#8 Health and Safety in Early Childhood	1: Promoting Child Development and Learning 4: Teaching and Learning	*Limited* cohesiveness between required courses and EEC core competency area.				
5: Learning environments and curriculum	#2 Program Planning and Environments for Young Children #3 Curriculum for Early Childhood Settings	1: Promoting Child Development and Learning 4: Teaching and Learning	Curriculum Development *(General and Content Specific)*	13 (81%)	37	17 (100%)	89
6: Observation, assessment, and documentation	#12 Child Observation, Documentation, and Assessment	3: Observing, documenting, and assessing to support young children and families	Observing and Recording	5 (31%)	5	11 (65%)	12
7: Program planning and development	#10 Child Care Policy #13 Child Care Administration	5: Growing as a professional	*Very limited* cohesiveness between required courses and EEC core competency area.				
8: Professionalism and leadership	#5 Advanced or Specialized ECE or Development #11 Supervision or Staff Development #10 Child Care Policy #13 Child Care Administration	5: Growing as a professional					
Imbedded across all 8 Core Competency Areas	#6 Children with Special Needs, Birth -16	Imbedded across NAEYC Standards	Special Needs	13 (81%)	16	16 (94%)	26
	#7 Infant and Toddler Development, Care, and Program Planning		Infants and Toddlers	7 (44%)	9	3 (18%)	3
	#3 Curriculum for Early Childhood Settings		Introduction to Early Childhood Education	13 (81%)	14	13 (76%)	18

Analysis:

The above comparison with EEC Core Competencies and NAEYC Standards is based on 2003 standards and needs updating. "Revisions to NAEYC's Initial standards (2001), Advanced standards (2002) and Associate standards (2003) made major shifts in terminology and format. Standards were worded more strongly in performance-based language. Key elements and supporting explanations were written for each standard. Rubrics were developed that described expectations from programs. Extensive references and resources provided the evidence base for each standard. All of the input and perspectives solicited during the revision process indicated that the 2001 - 2003 NAEYC standards remain strong. 2010 revisions are primarily organizational and reflect input from those who are actively implementing the standards in the field."[14]   During this transition period, NAEYC has determined that aassociates degree programs may continue to submit reports using the 2003 standards until spring 2013.

Phase I of the IHE Mapping project profiled 28 institutions of higher education including whether a program was accredited and the accrediting body.

- Some programs that are not accredited by NAEYC still align their early childhood degree programs with NAEYC associated degree program standards.
- 127 degree programs at 97 institutions in 25 states nationwide have earned NAEYC Early Childhood Associate Degree Accreditation, 6% of these programs are in Massachusetts.
- 8 of 14 (57%) Massachusetts' community colleges are accredited by NAEYC for one or more early childhood degree programs.
    1. Cape Cod Community College
    2. Greenfield Community College
    3. Mass Bay Community College
    4. Massasoit Community College
    5. Middlesex Community College
    6. North Shore Community College
    7. Northern Essex Community College
    8. Quinsigamond Community College

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[14] 2010 NAEYC Standards for Initial & Advanced Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs; page 20.