



ECACE
EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS
CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY

AAS Transfer
Working Group Meeting
February 18, 2022
Minutes

A meeting of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for AAS Transfer Working Group was called to order at 11 am via telephone and video conference as permitted by Public Act 101-0640.

Participating in the meeting were: Christi Chadwick, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Marcus Brown, Illinois Community College Board; Allison Decker, Illinois Community College Board; Melissa Batchelor, Lewis & Clark Community College; Kate Connor, City Colleges of Chicago (Truman College); Melissa Szymczak, Joliet Junior College; Jean Zaar, College of DuPage; Andrianna Smyrniotis, Illinois Central College; Paula Luszcz, Oakton Community College; Danyle Watkins, Lincoln Land Community College; Amy Hurd, Illinois State University; Joanne Kantner, Kishwaukee College; Jennifer Kirmes, Illinois State Board of Education; Anne Pradzinski, National Louis University; Lisa Downey, National Louis University; Eric Sheffield, Western Illinois University; Sarah Gowler, Kankakee Community College; Lindsay Maldonado, Northeastern Illinois University; Dawn Munson, Elgin Community College; Marie Donovan, DePaul University; Rebecca Pruitt, Lewis University; Nancy Harmening, DePaul University; Rachel Adeodu, Northeastern Illinois University; Amy Kelly, Governors State University; Amy Maxeiner, Black Hawk College; Stacie Kirk, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; Jennifer Hernandez, Illinois Board of Higher Education

Marcus Brown, Deputy Director Illinois Community College Board, welcomed the working group, went over general meeting guidelines, and went over the meeting agenda. Christi Chadwick explained the role and expectations of the working group. The group is tasked with reviewing articulation issues and other barriers which prevent students from finishing their degree. Illinois is facing a workforce shortage and the state has committed to investing in higher education to address these challenges. There are multiple state agencies that have been built to address the issues surrounding early childhood workforce shortages. Chadwick went over the five guiding principles of the working group in detail and stressed that this will not look the same for each institution, but the principles and intent should be consistent.

Marcus Brown explained that this meeting will focus on levels 4 and 5. The group should review and discuss competencies rather than individual courses as we approach this. The process is designed to validate the training, experience, and education that students have already received. The Level 4 Gateways entitlement is built into the AAS degree. The group will be looking at frameworks for this process and meeting presenters will discuss how this has transpired at their respective institutions.

Melissa Szymczak stated that the work she and Rebecca Pruitt took part in began during academic year 2011-12. The goal is to implement a successful AAS transfer pathway for students. They approached this prior to the competency conversations, and it was reviewed holistically. Ensuring that information presented to students was transparent and consistent at the onset of contact was critical. Building rapport with partner institutions was also necessary to developing these processes and ensure open and frequent communication.

Rebecca Pruitt explained that initially the programs were developed for traditional students and over the past few years additional options have been added to accommodate non-traditional

students to provide more flexibility. They looked at key assessments and assignments when the program was developed. The 2+2 agreements include the general education requirements, but the consortium provides for additional layers of review if needed. The program they offer is a PEL pathway with three endorsements. The university has not been waiving gen ed requirements up until this point but realize the consortium work may change that. Pruitt asked for guidance on how to adhere to ISBE general education requirements and the option to waive gen ed courses under the guidance from the consortium. If we waive gen ed requirements, what does that do to the ISBE gen ed requirements? Jennifer Kirmes explained that there is a list of content area coursework that is required. It does not necessarily specify that they are gen ed courses. Kirmes also advised that there is a rulemaking process in progress and comments are currently being analyzed. The intention of the rulemaking process is to remove these barriers and not be duplicative and name out specific coursework requirements; alignment to the content standards is most important.

Marcus asked about documentation around field experiences and how that is collected. Rebecca advised that students who come in with field work submit documentation for that course with signatures and the licensure officer maintains records of every student's fieldwork. Melissa advised that coursework that includes fieldwork or observation requirements contains that information in the course descriptions. Kate Connor asked about navigating advising with students across each 2+2 agreement. Melissa advised that each student pathway will be different and the important item to consider is which pathway works best based on prior learning and experience. Jean Zaar had a question about AAS completion and asked what happens when students have completed hours but may not be able to provide these signed documents for fieldwork and observations. Each school should be willing to accept the work if the hours/requirements are built into course descriptions. Zaar asked if it would be a barrier if students cannot show this documentation? The question was raised regarding whether the consortium could develop a process. Lisa Downey asked why we need this documentation from the 2-year institutions. Rebecca advised that for the PEL program it is good to have documentation to ensure requirements have been met and they are needed for audit purposes, which is why this process is in place. You cannot receive a Gateways level 4 without documentation either. No one has been prevented up to this point, but for audit purposes, it is good to have those on file. Jennifer Kirmes advised that she is keeping staff updated with work from the consortium and auditors will be trained in licensure requirements as a result of this legislation and various agreements. ISBE does not set a specific hour requirement for field experience and observation hours. These are program-level decisions at the institutional level and there may be changes as these things are developed.

The next presenter was Lisa Downey with NLU. She discussed the current approach the university is taking with ISBE requirements in place. She provided a degree audit example for a current student and explained how the process was handled for this example. The student had an AAS but was over the credit required. When the Registrar's office completed the audit, she had 11 ECE classes and 10 gen ed courses totaling 105 credit hours. The Registrar accepted 7 ECE courses and 9 gen eds. When an advisor or coach sits with student for the first advising appointment, they develop a degree plan. They identified the 4 courses that looked like courses needed within the plan and a form was submitted to accept these course equivalencies. Five additional courses were able to be considered and added to degree plan. Course recommendations were made based on student's outstanding requirements that make the most sense for the individual student. These articulation agreements are constantly changing, and flexibility is needed to ensure proper "fit" for each student. This happens more frequently for the students with an AAS, but they want to maximize transfer credits. Lisa then explained what they are working on for upcoming academic year. With an AAS degree they typically need about 6-7 gen ed courses and 2 level 5 competency courses

as part of the foundation. They then decide which pathway they would like to pursue. Marcus asked when students must select focus area. Lisa advised that sooner rather than later, but the student also must take the 6-7 gen ed courses which allows time for them to decide.

Kate Connor asked about the coaching and support services for students throughout this process. Lisa advised that there are 3 academic advisors that work with ECE students. These advisors are intimately aware of each student and their experiences. The students are mostly co-horted so there is also a faculty lead that works with them through the program. There is also a student success collaborative that focuses on professional development, data informed practice, program content, etc. Student progress is tracked, and faculty submit reports for students in their classes which may identify opportunities for outreach and intervention. Jean Zaar had a question about the model NLU is using. The clarity of the transfer guides is important and all AAS courses are listed there clearly for students.

Melissa Szymczak asked about how the level 5 competencies are reviewed from the community colleges. Child Family Community and Child Development are typically the 2 courses that are consistent for the AAS degree, but courses have not been specifically identified. A question for the group to consider was if these 2 courses should be considered part of the AAS. Christi asked the group to consider what parts of these models they identify with and may choose to implement at their own institutions. Marcus asked what types of challenges they anticipate when implementing these frameworks. Jean Zaar noted that when we think about the advising that occurs, there may be courses deemed non-transferrable within institutional advising guidelines and this may cause problems. Since legislation states that these courses are transferable, will there be a change to these articulation agreements? Marcus advised that no changes are required for those courses within the AAS degree. Marie Donovan advised that public universities do not always accept the AAS in its entirety and various funding levels tied to these agreements may affect how this is approached. Jennifer Kirmes advised that substantial resources are being put towards CTE programs. Kirmes also advised that Early Pathways are put into CTE and if there are barriers, they (ISBE) should be aware of those.

Marcus Brown provided closing statements and contact information for both he and Chadwick for questions, comments, feedback, etc. It was decided that the meetings should occur every 3 weeks considering many individuals participate in the CDA group, advisory group, and consortium meetings as well.

There was no public comment.

Chadwick and Brown thanked everyone for participating and contributing to the discussion. The meeting closed at 12:30 pm.