



CDA for Credit
Working Group Meeting
January 18, 2022
Minutes

A meeting of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity CDA for Credit Working Group was called to order at 1 pm via telephone and video conference as permitted by Public Act 101-0640.

Participating in the meeting were: Christi Chadwick, Illinois Board of Higher Education; Mackenzie Montgomery, Illinois Community College Board; Allison Decker, Illinois Community College Board; Sue Maes, Consultant; Zach Allen, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development; Melissa Batchelor, Lewis & Clark Community College; Carolyn Beal, Southwestern Illinois College; Kate Connor, City Colleges of Chicago (Truman College); Johnna Darragh Ernst, Heartland Community College; Jason Dockter, Lincoln Land Community College; Ireta Gasner, Start Early; Melissa Johnson, Highland Community College; Lindsay Meeker, Western Illinois University; Marcy Mendenhall, SAL Family and Community Services; Nichole Miller, Children's Home & Aid; Ashley Nazarak, Carole Robertson Center; Joi Patterson, Governors State University; Beth Smaka, Sauk Valley Community College; Melissa Szymczak, Joliet Junior College; and Jean Zaar, College of DuPage.

ECACE Project Director Christi Chadwick welcomed everyone and informed attendees how to submit public comment. A quick round of introductions followed.

Chadwick ran through the charge and purpose of the consortium and highlighted language from the [establishing legislation](#) that, by January 31, 2022, the Consortium shall decide how to assign college credit for the incumbent workers who have a Child Development Associate (CDA) and for future workers obtaining a CDA." The Consortium will also develop "standardized methods for awarding credit for prior learning". She then outlined the charge of the CDA for Credit working group and where the group is in the timeline.

Chadwick highlighted some areas of agreement on which the recommendations will be built – students are the first priority; no single, universal model may exist; and some things may be fundamental while others are flexible. She also reshared the Jamboard link where people can post ideas and questions.

Prior to this meeting, ECACE staff distributed draft recommendations for Fundamental Principles, based on the working groups' conversations, activities, and feedback.

Recommendation 1: Fundamental Principles

The CDA for Credit Working group recommends the following fundamentals should be adhered to by all Consortium member institutions.

- ***Meaningful Credit for the CDA:*** Programs must provide a clear pathway from the CDA to higher level credentials and degrees, and credit awarded must count towards the next credential and degree, in a way that shortens the pathway to graduation

- *Recognizing Acquired Competencies:* Programs must recognize the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they that the workforce has and for which they have been assessed, and, to the degree possible, students should not have to “re-prove” themselves through additional coursework and assessments.
- *Transfer of Credit:* Students must be able to transfer CDA credit to both 2-and 4-year Consortium member institutions and have this credit count towards credentials and degrees.
- *Transparency:* How and what credit is awarded must be transparent to current and potential students and employers.
- *Standard Number of Credits:* All institutions should award a standard number of credits for the CDA. (The number of credits will be determined over the coming months.)
- *Timely and Affordable:* Awarding credit to those who already hold the CDA when they come to a higher education institution must be timely and affordable and must not cost the same (time or money) as taking a class.

After quickly reviewing the fundamental principles, discussion resumed. Mendenhall highlighted that these recommendations benefit the student as well as the workforce. Chadwick noted that, in response to the worker shortage in some areas, some people are advocating reducing or eliminating a credential requirement from teacher qualifications, to more quickly meet the need. CDA to credit may help resolve that tension. Gasner said that her organization has fought against bill to reduce teacher qualification and appreciates these tangible examples that are beneficial to providers as well as students. Mendenhall agreed, sharing that Iowa has proposed legislation to make 15-year-olds lead teachers as well as to increasing class size. Illinois must address and solve the problem – worker shortage – rather than just reducing standards of care.

Patterson asked about the last two principles. Regarding the standard number of credits, she asked who determines how the number of credits established by this group translates to “seat time” credit and prior learning credit. Chadwick said the group has not yet established a “standard” credit but are looking to set a maximum and minimum rather than a specific number. ECACE has been gathering information from other states to learn about their practices. Chadwick said most states they have looked at offer around six credits, with Iowa offering a higher number. This group will have to think through what makes sense for Illinois. Meeker added that California and New York offer nine or ten hours. Chadwick said some institutions seem to have an 18 hour program but it is usually part of a larger pathway and not the same goal. Szymczak brought up the risk of unintended consequences of too tightly linking the CDA pathway to a degree program. She also reiterated that she would like to see a range of credit hours rather than a set number. Batchelor suggested requiring at least a minimum number of credits with the option of offering more. Gasner agreed that setting a minimum would clearly define for students what a CDA “buys them”. If an institution felt that their program offers more than that minimum, they can go over that number but it sets a standard baseline. Nazarak agreed about a minimum and added that, without a maximum, the range of credits offered by different institutions could seem arbitrary, which could lead to questions about the actual competencies being met. Chadwick asked about the difference between a standard award and how schools incorporate CDA into their programs going forward. Zaar said a school could spread out the competencies across multiple classes. However, the issue today is how to accept people who already have a CDA and how to award consistent credit. Zaar also noted the role that Gateways and NAEYC accreditation play in student and program assessment. Johnson asked about transferability. Patterson responded that, for her program’s accreditations, her program must certify different achievements – hours logged, competencies, etc. If a student transfers

from another program, the receiving institution does not have that information about their prior experience. Chadwick noted that the choice facing the consortium and institutions is not whether we accept credit but rather how. Gasner suggested talking to partners in other states to see how they have responded to accreditation issues, since this issue is not unique to Illinois. Darragh related this to the various reporting and accreditation issues tackled by the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Chadwick suggested changing the language to include a standard range for now until the group explores further.

Szymczak asked about putting credit for CDA on transcripts. Her institution has developed a multiple choice test they administer to students with a current or expired CDA. Students get college credit for their competencies as well as college courses that do not have those competencies. She worried we might create barriers for students who can demonstrate the competencies and should not have to take additional courses. She also wanted to make sure the CDA for credit is aligned with college programs. Chadwick asked the group for responses and suggested that prior learning assessment (PLA) could be of help here. Meeker responded that, for bundled courses, would be necessary but unbundled, module-based programs probably would not need it as much. Zaar added that we should look at this not as asking a student to reprove themselves but rather that they demonstrate what is not acknowledged within the CDA, the additional pieces that are part of the course but not the CDA. Maybe schools can offer elective courses that boost their CDA portfolio. Currently different institutions have different electives; a standard, collaborative core course could help PLA. Statewide consistency is important, too. Nazarak agreed that seems more transparent and helpful for students. Chadwick asked for clarification on whether students are being reassessed for the same competencies or being assessed for other competencies.

Szymczak again raised the issue of forcing students to reprove their competencies, noting that part of the second fundamental principle seemed to leave that open to interpretation. Chadwick brought the focus back to the intent of the legislation, recognizing workers' experience and knowledge and translating that into credits. Meeker said her institution had similar concerns and conversations regarding PLA and cautioned about over testing. She believes unbundling and modularizing to be more effective than additional testing. Mendenhall, speaking from an employer's perspective, emphasized the importance of speed and helping students earn credit quickly. Connor said higher education institutions will need clarity on how and when to award credit. Chadwick said the group seemed to want PLA or a standardized assessment that evaluates a student's competencies across the board, not just for a single course. Gasner suggested rewording the relevant fundamental principle to include that students should not have to reprove competencies that the CDA aligns with.

Connor raised some logistical and implementation concerns – combining CDA and PLA, aligning the competencies assessment with an institution's outcomes assessment, and how schools should handle students entering with some but not all competencies. Meeker, Szymczak, Darragh, and Zaar suggested ideas to address those concerns.

Chadwick also highlighted some "Important but Optional" items included in the recommendations.

- *CDA on the Way: Students should be able to earn college credit while they work towards the CDA. Early Childhood coursework and embedded competencies could be sequenced so that students can attend higher education programs and, early in the program, meet the educational requirements and have the required competencies to be awarded the CDA. In addition, programs could embed activities needed to complete the portfolio within these courses*

- *Embedding CDA within High School Dual Credit Programs: Programs might consider working with area high schools to establish dual credit programs that embed CDA competencies within the work. At graduation, it would be possible to earn the CDA at the same time as the high school diploma, which would allow students to be “workforce ready” upon graduation. Competencies toward the Level 2 Credential could also be partially met, putting them on a pathway to higher credentials and degrees.*

Chadwick proposed setting May 2022 as a date to return to the Consortium with more information, details, and models and proposed January 2023 as an implementation date. Meeker and Connor asked clarifying questions about the dates, scholarships, and semester schedules.

Chadwick then asked about how the CDA group wants to take the recommendations to the Consortium, particularly considering some members may not be very familiar with CDA. Group members volunteered or were volunteered to present. Finally, Chadwick briefly asked about a schedule going forward.

There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 pm.