

Is Yours a Blended Program? Or Are You Developing One?

To be approved by NAEYC, programs that prepare early childhood professionals must provide their candidates with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to meet the needs of all children, including children with disabilities and developmental delays.

However, some programs go beyond that level of attention to provide a “unified” or “blended” program with depth and focus both in general early childhood education *and* in early childhood special education. A blended early childhood professional preparation program combines all the elements called for in NAEYC’s early childhood standards and those in CEC’s early childhood special education standards in a curriculum that is planned, implemented, and evaluated by an interdisciplinary group of faculty and other individuals.

Blended programs may request review under a joint process involving both NAEYC- and CEC-trained reviewers that recognizes their distinctive nature.

Considering the following questions may help you decide whether the early childhood program at your institution—or a program you are designing—is a blended program.

Questions to consider:

- Does your state have a Blended or Unified Early Childhood license? It is not essential for your state to offer such a license in order for your institution to have a blended program. However, in many cases blended programs have been developed in response to state licensure. In some states students who graduate from a state-approved blended program automatically receive dual licensure in Early Childhood Education and Early Childhood Special Education.
- Do your general early childhood education faculty and your early childhood special education faculty *jointly* plan and implement the program?

Looking specifically at the NAEYC Initial Licensure standards and at CEC’s Content Standards and its Common Core (CC) and Early Childhood (EC) knowledge and skill base standards—

- Do all candidates in your program receive *in-depth preparation* that leads to competence in both early childhood education and early childhood special education? Do your program’s courses provide candidates with the knowledge and skills they need to support children who are typically developing *and* those with special needs? Do your program’s internships offer in-depth experiences with children with *and* without disabilities?
- Are your program’s candidates *assessed* against both early childhood education and early childhood special education standards, including the NAEYC standards, the CEC Common Core, and the CEC/DEC specialization standards?

In summary—

- Do all of your early childhood candidates complete a *common* program that prepares them for both general early childhood education and early childhood special education?

Next steps

If your program is a blended program—

- Submit your **blended special education/early childhood education** Program Report to NCATE for review by NAEYC in collaboration with CEC. This report should follow the NAEYC Initial Licensure Standards and Program Report Outline. It should also include responses to the CEC Content Standards. (The easiest way to respond to the CEC standards is to use Form A in the Guidelines for the Preparation of the Special Education Program Report, available on the CEC Website. Go to www.cec.sped.org, click on Search, then search for “Guidelines for Preparation of the Special Education Program Report.”)

If your program is *not* a blended program, but you do offer both early childhood education and early childhood special education preparation, you should—

- Submit your **early childhood education** Program Report to NCATE for review by NAEYC.
- Submit your **early childhood special education** Program Report to NCATE for review by CEC.

Resources

- Blanton, L.P., C.C. Griffin, J.A. Winn, & M.C. Pugach, eds. 1997. *Teacher education in transition: Collaborative programs to prepare general and special educators*. Denver: Love.
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- Stayton, V.D., & P.S. Miller. 1993. Combining general and special education standards in personnel preparation programs: Experiences from two states. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education* 13: 372–87.
- Stayton, V.D., P.S. Miller, & L. Dinnebeil, eds. 2002. *Recommended practices in personnel preparation: Guidelines for early childhood special educators*. Longmont, CO: Sopris West Educational Services.

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