# **Professional Standards and Competencies Discussion Group Toolkit**

Thank you for your engagement in the revisions to the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators! We deeply appreciate your time, expertise, and willingness to help us make the standards and competencies as strong as possible and for actively inviting and engaging others to do the same.

We have created this toolkit for individuals interested in hosting discussion groups on the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators as well as the leveling. Within the toolkit you will find:

* [A Sample Invitation to Participate in a Discussion Group](#sampleinvitetext) (p.2)
* [Preparing for the Discussion Group](#preparingdiscussiongroup) (p.3)
* [Managing the Discussion Group](#managingdiscussiongroup) (p.4)
* [Sample Agenda and Talking Points for the Discussion Group](#sampleagenda) (p.6)
* [Expectations for Providing Feedback to NAEYC](#providingfeedbacktonaeyc) (p.10)
  + [A Template for Submitting the Facilitator’s Discussion Group Feedback to NAEYC](#discussiongroupfacilitatorfeedback)
  + [A Template Feedback Form for Individuals Participating in the Discussion Group](#individualfeedbackform)

There are also a number of resources on NAEYC’s website that can support your discussion group:

* Public Draft #2 of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators
* Message to the Field
* A slide deck that provides a brief overview of the revisions
* A Chart that Compares Public Draft #1 and Public Draft #2
* Final Recommendations from [Decision Cycle 2](https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/decision_cycle_2_final.pdf) of Power to the Profession

# Sample Text for a Standards and Competencies Discussion Group Invitation and/or Flyer

## **Join us for an Opportunity to Provide Feedback on the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators**

## Public Draft #2 of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators is now available for public comment. These are meant to serve as the core, general standards and competencies for the profession, and, as such, our feedback is critical to ensuring that they are as strong as possible. In addition, this document includes the first draft of the leveling of the standards and competencies to the ECE I, ECE II and ECE III designations recommended in Power to the Profession.

## We invite you to participate in a discussion group to share your feedback, contribute your suggestions, and to raise your questions or concerns.

## Hosted by:

## Date & Time:

## Location: To Register:

## Placeholder for Logos

# Preparing for the Discussion Group

Once invitations have been sent to the participants, there are several steps needed to prepare for the discussion group.

* **Identify and share discussion questions.** This is complex content, with deep implications. Therefore, to prepare individuals for the discussion group, we encourage you to share the following “Questions to Consider” ahead of time, as part of the frame to set up the discussion:
* What are the core knowledge and practices beginning early childhood educators should have?
* Does Public Draft #2 of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators reflect these?
* What are your first impressions of the leveling of the standards and competencies?
* Does the leveling help you understand the depth and breadth to which you need to master the knowledge and skills outlined in the standards and competencies (or support/guide individuals in mastering the standards and competencies)?
* **Send any needed pre-reading materials**. In addition to the discussion questions, send participants a link to Public Draft #2 of the Professional Standards and Competencies and any other pre-reading materials that you would like all participants to have?
* **Prepare an agenda and facilitation plan.** Your agenda will be your roadmap for your group discussion. Spend time talking through the agenda with the facilitator and other planning group members. The “Sample Detailed Agenda with Facilitator Talking Points” in this toolkit will help you think through and finalize your agenda.
* **Identify clear roles for each person involved in planning the event**, clearly defining:
* who will welcome participants,
* the role of the facilitator,
* who will serve as notetaker(s),
* how feedback will be analyzed, and by who,
* who will report results to NAEYC, and
* how follow-up and next steps will be handled.
* **Facilitators should read all resources provided by NAEYC in full** in order to be aware of the important context-setting details and questions to answers about Public Draft #2 of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators.
* **Send reminders to participants** with logistics, any pre-reading, and goals of the discussion group.

# Managing the Discussion Group

The key to a successful discussion group is to ensure that participants feel safe in the environment, believe that they will be heard, and understand that their feedback will be taken seriously and used to make positive changes. Each of the steps below is designed to foster these outcomes:

1. Opening the Meeting

* **Introductions** (plan for how participants will introduce themselves and whether they will have time to meet each other individually or have group introductions). Ensure that all organizers/planners and the facilitator introduce themselves and their role(s).
* **Housekeeping announcements (if applicable).** Mention logistics, reimbursements, etc.
* **Review agenda.** Give participants an overview of the agenda, including the goals for the meeting. Provide time for questions or clarifications.
* **Explain what will happen with the information shared** during the discussion group and how it will be used, and that participants confidentiality will be maintained unless otherwise noted.
* **Identify group norms.** The facilitator or discussion leader may find it useful to establish a group agreement, which outlines some principles for participation, such as:
* be respectful and allow one person to speak at a time;
* everyone is encouraged to say something;
* keep the discussion ‘in the room’ (confidential);
* use appropriate humor;
* ask questions without making assumptions; and
* any culturally appropriate aspects or conditions.

1. **Closing the meeting**

* Thank people for their time, participation, and engagement
* Remind participants of the other ways to provide feedback
* Provide contact details for the facilitator(s) in case participants need to follow-up
* Remind participants about what will happen with the information shared during the discussion group

**Facilitator Tips**

* Use the talking points found in the Supplemental Resources section of this guide as a starting point for your script
* Let the conversation flow and allow people to tell their story
* Listen well and respectfully
* Use verbal and non-verbal communication effectively
* Use prompts and probes to facilitate conversation and explore topics in more depth:
  + Prompts may be silence, which can allow participants the time to gather their thoughts to response, or an encouraging sound, such as ‘mmm’ or ‘uh-huh’.
  + Probes are ways to explore the response further or clarify a response by requesting more information
* Move the discussion if one person is holding the floor, by saying things like:
  + “I might get you to hold that thought.”
  + “Let’s hear from someone else.”
  + “Is that the case for others?”
  + “Does anyone have a different opinion/suggestion/concern?”

## 

# Sample Detailed Agenda with Facilitator Talking Points

**Sample Overview Agenda**

* Welcome and Introductions (5 min)
* Review discussion group goals and establish group agreement (5 min)
* Discussion on the content of the Professional Standard and Competencies (20-30 min)
* Discussion on the leveling (20-30 min)
* Closing (5 min)

**Detailed Agenda**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Content or Learning Objective** | **Activity** | **Key Talking Points** |
| 5 min | Welcome and introductions | General welcome to group | Introduce yourself and why this conversation matters to you (in a few sentences).  Ask participants to introduce themselves |
| 5 min | Discussion Group Goals | Review discussion group goals and establish group agreement  **If you are meeting in-person, you may want to have individuals complete the “Individual Feedback Form” on p. 15 of this toolkit in addition to submitting the Facilitator Feedback Form** | * Walk participants through the goals and objectives of the discussion group and outline a group agreement with principles for participation * Remind them that you will be sharing aggregate feedback from the Discussion Group with NAEYC |
| 20-30 min | Professional Standards and Competencies | Facilitate Discussion on the content of the Professional Standards and Competencies  If you are facilitating an in-person session, you may want to consider making these table discussions rather than whole group discussion.  Reference pages 3-31 of the Professional Standards and Competencies as well as Appendix B on p. 58-61. | Key points:   * this is Public Draft #2 of the standards and competencies * these are meant to serve as the core, general competencies for the profession serving young children birth-8, in all settings * Revisions in this document reflect recommendations from Decision Cycle 2 of Power to the Profession as well as incorporate recent research and promising practices.   Participant Feedback:  Ask participants to reflect on the following questions   * Overall, do the standards and competencies reflect core knowledge and skills that every beginning early childhood educator should have? * Are there particular standards or key competencies that raise questions or concerns? * Do you have suggestions or concerns related to the structure, clarity of language, and level of detail in the standards and competencies? * The revised standards and competencies elevate a discussion on social justice, equity and diversity, supporting young children’s social-emotional development, as well as on content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge within the disciplines. How do you envision these revisions and others impacting your role within the profession? |
| 20-30 min | Leveling of the Professional Standards and Competencies | Facilitate Discussion on the leveling of the Professional Standards and Competencies  If you are facilitating an in-person session, you may want to consider making these table discussions rather than whole group discussion.  Reference Appendix A on p. 37-56 of Public Draft #2 of the Professional Standards and Competencies | Key points:   * The leveling maps the standards and competencies to the ECE I, II and III designations laid out in Decision Cycles 3,4,5 of Power to the Profession * This is the first draft of the leveling * The leveling is meant to serve as a guide to help inform   + preparation programs about the breadth and depth of the standards and competencies they need to include in their curriculum;   + early childhood educators about the level of knowledge and skills they should have in their role in the early learning setting   + states and employers about how to shape their standards, evaluation systems and licensure systems * the leveling does not include each and every aspect of each competency, but rather is meant to serve as a general guide   Participant Feedback:  Ask participants to reflect on the following questions   * Overall, do you support the general direction of the leveling to the ECE I, II and III designations? * Thinking about the designation (ECE I, II or III) with which you are most familiar, does the content in that column reasonably reflect current knowledge and practice as well as the updated knowledge and practice reflected in Public Draft #2 of the Standards and Competencies for those working within that designation? * Which level(s) is most accurately described? * Which level(s) is most problematic? * Is the structure of the leveling helpful in understanding expectations for knowledge and practice at the ECE I, II and III level? If not, what suggestions do you have for improving it? * What are some potential positive impacts the leveling could have on the profession? * What are some potential negative impacts the leveling could have on the profession? * What questions/concerns do the leveling raise for you? |
| 5 min | Wrap Up and Close |  | Key points:  ● thank participants for their contributions  ● ask each person to share a one-word take-away from the discussion  ● remind participants that the public comment period is open through June 14. Encourage them to submit their individual feedback through the NAEYC survey |

# Providing Feedback to NAEYC

The following steps will help ensure that participant responses are captured and passed on to NAEYC in a meaningful way.

* **Taking notes.** The note-taker(s) should record questions asked, major topics, key issues and responses, and key quotes (word for word as possible). Two note-takers may be required to ensure accuracy in the collection of notes, depending on the size of the group and the capacity of the notetakers.
* You may also ask participants for their permission to record the session, in order to go back and take verbatim notes and/or check the accuracy of quotes.
* **Analyzing the results.** Using the notes, organize the feedback received into categories (i.e., “concerns,” “unanswered questions,” “positives,” “structure and clarity” “leveling,” etc.). Look for:
* Patterns and similarities
* Areas of significant difference/divergence
* Major themes
* Key takeaways
* Other issues/parking lot items
* **Reporting to NAEYC.** The results of each discussion group will be aggregated to draw a picture of the overall feedback from the field. Use the “Discussion Group Facilitator Feedback Form” to write a response to each question below.
* How many individuals participated in the discussion group?
* What were major themes that emerged during the discussion group?
* What were the key learnings grouped by key points?
* How many times something was raised, to what detail, and how much emotion was expressed?
* What quotes did you obtain that articulate key messages from the discussion?
* What feedback do you have on the process and learnings from conducting the discussion group?
* Are there materials you did not have that would have been helpful to facilitate the conversation?

*The “Discussion Group: Quick Guide” is adapted, with permission, from Agency for Clinical Innovation’s Participant experience discussion groups: Facilitation guide, found at: https://bit.ly/2OoIE1c*

# Discussion Group Facilitator Feedback Form

If you are holding a discussion group, to the extent possible, please share the following information with NAEYC. You can email this form to Mary Harrill at [mharrill@naeyc.org](mailto:mharrill@naeyc.org) or mail it to NAEYC, Attn: Mary Harrill 1313 L St NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005.

1. **Date of the Discussion Group** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. **Discussion Group Modality (circle one)**: In-person Conference Call Virtual Platform (e.g. Zoom)

3. **Total number of individuals participating**: \_\_\_\_\_\_

4. **# of Participants by Role**

\_\_\_ Teacher/Assistant Teacher

\_\_\_ Associate Degree Faculty

\_\_\_ Baccalaureate or Graduate Faculty for programs that do not lead to licensure

\_\_\_ Baccalaureate or Graduate Faculty for programs that lead to licensure

\_\_\_ Family Child Care Provider

\_\_\_ Coach/Trainer/Mentor

\_\_\_ Program Administrator or Staff who are responsible for performance evaluations or support

\_\_\_ Government Agency Staff

\_\_\_ Professional Organization/Association Staff

\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_ Unsure

5. **What was the overall level of support for the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (excluding the leveling)? Select one of the following responses:**

1. Strong support for the standards and competencies
2. Most supported the standards and competencies with some minor concerns
3. There was a fairly equal split between those who support and did not support the standards and competencies
4. Most did not support the standards and competencies

**6. Use this space to capture feedback related to specific standards**

**7. Use this space to capture feedback/suggestions for improving the structure or clarity of the standards and competencies.**

8. **What was the overall level of support for the Leveling of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators? Select one of the following responses:**

1. Strong support for the leveling
2. Most supported the leveling with some minor concerns
3. There was a fairly equal split between those who support and did not support the leveling
4. Most did not support the leveling

9. **Use this space to capture feedback/suggestions related to the leveling**

**Name of the Facilitator** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Email Address** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the organization hosting the discussion group** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

# Individual Feedback Form

1. **Name, Email Address, Organization (Optional)** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. **Please check the box that most closely represents your role in the early childhood field**

\_\_\_ Teacher/Assistant Teacher

\_\_\_ Associate Degree Faculty

\_\_\_ Baccalaureate or Graduate Faculty for programs that do not lead to licensure

\_\_\_ Baccalaureate or Graduate Faculty for programs that lead to licensure

\_\_\_ Family Child Care Provider

\_\_\_ Coach/Trainer/Mentor

\_\_\_ Program Administrator or Staff who are responsible for performance evaluations or support

\_\_\_ Government Agency Staff

\_\_\_ Professional Organization/Association Staff

\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_ Unsure

3. **What is your overall level of support for the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators (excluding the leveling)? Select one of the following responses:**

1. Strong support for the standards and competencies
2. Support the standards and competencies with some minor concerns
3. Do not support the standards
4. Unsure

**4. Use this space to share your feedback related to specific standards**

**5. Use this space to share your feedback/suggestions for improving the structure or clarity of the standards and competencies.**

6. **What is your overall level of support for the Leveling of the Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators? Select one of the following responses:**

1. Strong support for the leveling
2. Support the leveling with some minor concerns
3. Do not support the leveling
4. Unsure

7. **Use this space to share your feedback/suggestions related to the leveling**

Please return this form to the individual facilitating the discussion group or email this form to Mary Harrill at [mharrill@naeyc.org](mailto:mharrill@naeyc.org)