

**Testimony by Susan Titterton of VTAEYC's Advancing ECE as a Profession
For Vermont House Committee on Human Services
March 31, 2023**

[Link to slides that accompany this written narrative](#)

Chair Wood, Vice-Chair Brumstead, and Respected Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I am honored and also very grateful to this committee for your steadfast commitment to early care and education in Vermont.

Slide 1: My name is Susan Titterton. Since 2018, I have been the Project Coordinator for Advancing Early Childhood Education as a Recognized Profession, an initiative of the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children.

I have the privilege of speaking today on behalf of the Advancing as a Profession Task Force and our workforce-led initiative that for the past three years has been building the foundation for advancing ECE as a recognized profession. That consensus-based work has engaged well over 1,000 members of the Vermont ECE workforce (in fact we count over 3,000 individual contact points and over 200 group sessions) in determining whether and how to move forward as a recognized profession, as described in the national Unifying Framework.

My goal today is to give you a high-level overview of the work of Advancing ECE as a Profession, including what we've been doing in the area of compensation.

Slide 2: We've known for quite some time that the early care and education system isn't working. NAEYC could see that at the national level; we could see that in Vermont.

Slide 3: As NAEYC began its work on Power to the Profession, culminating in the Unifying Framework, some of us in VT were paying close attention.

Slide 4: The Audacious Vision, while having some similarities to the language of the other visions we've heard, clearly highlights having "an effective, diverse, well-prepared and well-compensated workforce." We might think of the workforce as the heart of the system; otherwise, nothing really works.

Slide 5: Right from the beginning of our work in Vermont, we made the commitment that it would be workforce-led and consensus-based. Vermont has been pretty unique in this grassroots approach. It seemed clear from the beginning that to move from a fragmented system to a recognized profession, we had to cultivate leadership, shared knowledge, voice, and shared identity among those in the workforce.

Phase 1 question: “What is the will of the workforce regarding advancing as a profession?”

- We facilitated in-person conversations in all regions of the state with a broad cross-section of the workforce - all settings (family-home-based, center-based, Head Start, school-based) and the response in companion surveys was 72% supported advancing as a profession.

Phase 2 question: “Will the Vermont workforce choose to align with the Unifying Framework?”

- A Task Force was formed with members from all regions of the state, including a diversity of programs and roles - family child care homes, center-based, public, private, teachers, directors, early education coordinators, and higher education faculty.
- We specifically recruited those who were working directly with young children and families, rather than those working in agencies or other organizations. It was a brand-new group and almost none of them knew each other.
- As the Task Force got to know each other and began discussing research on professions, the Unifying Framework was published in March 2020.
- From there the Task Force’s consensus process was the following:
 - Study one piece of the Unifying Framework and create a Discussion Draft
 - Use every outreach strategy we could think of to engage as many of the workforce as possible in PD sessions where they:
 - Learned about that piece of the Unifying Framework
 - Had a facilitated conversation about their reactions
 - Completed surveys to gauge the level of support for aligning with the Unifying Framework and questions and concerns raised most often.

Phase 3 question: “How will it work?”

- Starting in Phase 2, we were reaching out to stakeholders in the ECE Ecosystem - AOE, CDD, BBF and their committees, Northern Lights at CCV, the Early Childhood Higher Education Consortium, and others with updates and dialogue over the past several years. In just this last year, we’ve started doing some implementation design drafting with some of these entities.

Slide 6: Professional Identity

- This slide shows the consensus of support for this piece that clearly describes who early childhood educators are and what they do.
- For implementation, this is now becoming common language used by more and more of the workforce in their program descriptions, communications with families, etc. and we see these terms in the recent RAND Financing Report.

Slide 7: One Profession Three Designations

- This slide connects three designations, what preparation they require, what they are qualified to do, and the idea of increasing compensation tied to the designations.

- This was a complex bundle of connected pieces and the Task Force wasn't sure what the workforce feedback would be.

Slide 8: Three Designations

- You can see the consensus of support for this part of the Unifying Framework.
- For implementation, one frequently raised concern was how the current workforce, who might not have the educational credentials would fare in this new structure. So, there is a design team of current educators who have been helping to develop a "bridge" process that values experience and expertise, so we don't lose anyone in the transition to the profession.

Slide 9: Professional Compensation

- This slide shows the consensus of support for Unifying Framework recommendations for professional compensation, which are about the principles for designing this, not the dollars.
- For implementation, a design team has drafted Minimum Compensation Standards through a thoughtful, research-based, supported by the workforce. Some key strengths of their work include:
 - Breaking down the average K-3 public school teacher wage to come up with an hourly wage that was then used in combination with the longer hours and more calendar days of other ECE programs to calculate a "true wage parity."
 - Looking at other professions to inform their design, and
 - Doing preliminary work on a benefits package, especially health insurance
 - Framing their work around the 3 designations - ECE I, II, and III, as well as a "pipeline"

Slide 10: Professional Licensure

- You can see the consensus of support for these recommendations in the Unifying Framework.
- For implementation, a couple things to note are the "bridge" design that I've already mentioned and also the responses for "Supports I Would Value."

Slide 11: Shared Accountability Model with quote from Unifying Framework

- I thought you might appreciate this graphic of Shared Accountability and its description as you continue your deliberative and dedicated work toward a system that works for Vermont.
- UF p. 15: "As a profession, we welcome **increased, clear, and consistent accountability** tied to our definitions of professional competencies and resulting in increased compensation. We understand that we can only expect **significant increases in public financing** that are needed to move the profession forward if we are willing to be accountable for their effective use. We also understand that we can only be held accountable if we have the **necessary and sufficient supports, resources, and infrastructure.**"

Slide 12: Trajectory for Advancing as a Profession

- Next steps:
 - Study the model legislation and discuss with many groups at many tables how it may be applied in Vermont
 - Continue dialogue with the Office of Professional Regulation about initiating a Sunrise Review Application
- We are aiming for an early childhood education profession that people will be:
 - inspired by & drawn to
 - prepared for & continually building their expertise for
 - able to survive and thrive in, as a sustainable & rewarding lifelong career
- To bring this back around, and with the Shared Accountability Model in mind, I don't think we get there without professional compensation being a key part of the framework.

I thank you each and every one for your kind attention and your diligent work on behalf of the children, families and early childhood educators of Vermont. If you have any questions, I will gladly do my best to answer.

Advancing ECE as a Recognized Profession - Helpful Resources

- Consensus on Compensation: [Video](#)
- Consensus on Compensation: [Document](#)
- [Link to VTAEYC website page](#) with all Advancing as a Profession information
- [Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession](#)