

Early Educator Certification (EEC): The Next Step in Professionalizing the Field

We are professionals. Teachers and teacher assistants working in child care, pre-kindergarten and Head Start settings, school age group leaders and coordinators, family child care providers, administrators, faculty, specialists, coordinators, trainers, consultants and researchers and more compose a growing workforce of professional Early Educators in North Carolina. Our profession is based on research and guided by standards for practice that together serve to inform the services we provide to children and families.

Are you ready to be part of a profession? North Carolina is the first in the nation to increase its workforce professional development standards by certifying the education of those who work directly with, intend to work with, and/or work on the behalf of children ages birth to twelve.

What is Early Educator Certification (EEC)? EEC is acknowledgement of an individual's verified level of educational achievement, based on a standardized scale. Education is the basis for EEC. Education is coursework taken at a **regionally accredited** college or university. All public community colleges and universities in North Carolina are regionally accredited.

How have other occupations become professions? School teachers have it, nurses have it, hair dressers have it, even plumbers have it! Almost all occupations in the United States require their workforce to become certified to be part of the profession. It's time for our field to be recognized as a profession with a specialized body of knowledge and defined skills required of each position.

What organization certifies Early Educators in NC? The NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development (Institute), founded in 1993, is the certifying body for Early Educators in North Carolina. The mission of the Institute is to define and advocate for the implementation of a comprehensive early childhood professional development system. A comprehensive system is one that provides supportive, accessible, and individually appropriate education which is linked to compensation in order to ensure high quality care and education services for children and families.

Why should I get certified? As with other occupations, EEC recognizes and validates educational accomplishments of Early Educators. Individuals, children, programs, and society benefit when the education of those working in a profession increases.

How do I qualify for EEC? To apply for EEC, submit an application, **official** college transcripts for ALL courses taken and/or degrees earned and the initial EEC fee to the Institute. Credit for professional work experience is not used to determine your EEC level.

Is a test required to be a certified Early Educator in NC? No test is currently required to obtain EEC.

What is the difference between EEC and individual licensure? EEC is acknowledgement of an individual's verified level of educational achievement, based on a standardized scale. EEC does not issue a personal or teacher license. For example, NC B-K licensure is granted under the authority of the North Carolina State Board of Education to individuals who successfully complete formal education and student teaching requirements through an accredited teacher education program.

How much does it cost? EEC is a self-supporting system, which has been created with funding from private and public sources and is now funded primarily by individual fees. EEC fees are aligned with charges required by similar NC professions. The cost for an initial review is \$50. The fee for EEC recertification is \$25, if completed prior to the issued expiration date. In some cases, support for application fees may be provided by local agency grants, professional associations, an employer or other sources.

What is the EEC application process?

Step 1: Complete and sign your application.

Step 2: Attach all official transcripts (for degrees and individual courses) to your application.

Step 3: Attach a check or money order.

Step 4: Make a copy of all materials for your files.

Step 5: Mail to: NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, PO Box 959, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Does my EEC expire? Your certificate is valid for a period of time based on the amount of education you possess when you become certified. The period ranges from 2 to 5 years dependent on your education level. If you obtain more education in between recertification periods you may choose to submit your official transcripts to the Institute to increase your EEC level.

Why am I required to continue my education? As with all professions, certified individuals must continue their education to maintain their professional certification.

For **level 5 and below** (Silver Levels), EEC professionals must continue their education at a rate of 6 semester credit hours per certification period. Coursework in any field will be accepted toward the 6 semester hours required for recertification at any level. Early Educators are encouraged to take coursework that will help them achieve a higher EEC level.

For **levels 6 and above** (Gold Levels), EEC professionals must complete 6 semester credit hours or 10 continuing education units (CEU) or a combination of the two. For either **level 9 or 10**, professionals who are certified and who teach in a higher education system may receive credit for teaching rather than having to complete formal coursework.

Can I apply if I am not currently employed in North Carolina? All persons who are currently or considering working directly with or on the behalf of children ages birth to twelve are eligible to become certified as a NC Early Educator by submitting the required paperwork. Out-of-state applicants may apply for EEC with the submission of the required documents.

Learn more! Go to www.ncchildcare.org, click on Early Educator Certification and take your next step!

North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development
PO Box 959, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514
EEC Department - info@nceec.org or 919-942-7442