



Early Childhood Policy In Institutions of Higher Education

*An Initiative Funded by the Heising-Simons Foundation
and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund*

ECPIHE OVERVIEW

September 2020

Innovative and ambitious, the Early Childhood Policy in Institutions of Higher Education (ECPIHE) Initiative is an exciting opportunity to dramatically improve the quality, equitable distribution, sustainability and efficiency of services for young children by developing and implementing a new approach to early childhood. With a focus on policy, this effort seeks to build upon and augment extant pedagogical and practice work for the benefit of all children and families. The purpose of this document is to acquaint the reader with the ECPIHE Initiative. To do so, information is presented in three parts: (I) the Rationale and Demand for ECPIHE; (II) the ECPIHE Initiative; and (III) ECPIHE Products and Accomplishments to date.

PART I – RATIONALE AND DEMAND FOR ECPIHE

Throughout the world, interest in young children is soaring. Predicated on a wealth of knowledge that attests to the importance of the early years and the ability of quality services to improve children’s developmental outcomes, services that attend to the health, education, and care of young children are commanding greater attention. This interest has been manifest in increases in: the number of young children (birth to age 8) receiving an array of services, the range of services provided for these children, and the investments being made by policy leaders domestically and internationally to achieve increases in the number and nature of services provided.

These practice and policy changes are accompanied by changes in how we *think* about services for young children and their families. Pedagogically, a new ethos surrounding quality is emerging, accompanied by near-universal consolidated support for child-centered, play-based approaches to development and learning that honor diverse cultures and allow for multiple implementation approaches. Biophysically, new ideas are taking hold about the need to, and elixirs that, maximize young children’s neurological and physical development. And systemically, bold new “rethinks” are centering on the need to minimize the proliferation of scattered, disparate services and maximize newly defined systemic outcomes — the quality of the provided services, their equitable distribution to the population, their sustainability over time, and their economic efficiency. The movement from adult- to child-centered, from mono- to multi-culturally and multi-linguistically responsive practices, from fixed to pliant development, and from a sole focus on child outcomes to a focus on both child *and* systemic outcomes are

merely a few of the transformations in thinking that are framing a new era for early childhood efforts.

Noteworthy as these practical and intellectual efforts are, they face serious challenges on many fronts. First, policies are often devised by individuals who do not represent the race, ethnicity, or background of the children they serve, limiting the impact of these policies. Second, policies are often layered atop the current hodge-podge of services, without requisite attention to their quality, accessibility, sustainability, efficiency, or effectiveness. Consequently, most policy efforts focus on pedagogical enhancements, with only scant attention accorded the infrastructural elements that produce quality. Third, insufficient funding is attached to the policies despite abundant and increasing expectations for performance.

To address these concerns and redress decades of doing business as usual, there is an urgent need to move beyond preparing pedagogical personnel and to prepare a workforce that will think differently, lead in new ways, and tackle the policy, infrastructure, and advocacy challenges that the present era of early childhood services inspire. These leaders must know and represent the communities of enrolled children and must speak the languages of those being served. They must also understand adult learning, institutional change, systems theory, economics, and/or political science — all requisite domains for affecting the considerable social change that early childhood policy (ECP) requires. Not only pedagogical practitioners, these future leaders need preparation in the disciplines and skill sets that will enable them to understand and use data, to think critically and outside the box, and to understand the nuances of the policymaking and implementation processes. Such individuals need exposure to diverse social sciences, including economics, sociology, and political science so that they are equipped to join forces with pedagogical leaders as they design, analyze, and advocate for constructive policies driven by research and evidence-based practice.

When facing shifting zeitgeists and changing societal demands, Americans look to research and science, leading them directly to institutions of higher education (IHEs). In keeping with that tradition and in an effort to make durable long-term change in the policies that frame early childhood services, the Early Childhood Policy in Institutions of Higher Education (ECPIHE) initiative focuses on IHEs as unit of change. Funded by the Heising-Simons Foundation and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, and building on early childhood policy programs that have been created in a limited number of institutions, ECPIHE seeks to create the tools, platforms, and mechanisms that will advance the study of ECP in America. ECPIHE aims to create a field that will make substantial, durable, and equitable policy change that benefits young children and their families.

PART II - THE ECPIHE INITIATIVE

II.1. ECPIHE Goals

- ***To prepare a new cadre of leaders to design, analyze, and advocate for constructive policies driven by research and evidence-based practice;***

- *To enhance the study of, and experiences related to, early childhood policy in American institutions of higher education;*
- *To create a repertoire of easily accessible, open-access sample tools that will assist in reaching the above goals; and,*
- *To establish and brand a new field of inquiry, Early Childhood Policy (ECP).*

II.2. ECPIHE Objectives

- *To create an appreciation of, and appetite for, the importance of early childhood policy (ECP) as a critical domain of inquiry within institutions of higher education (IHEs) and other professional development institutes/centers;*
- *To define the requisite and recommended elements (content) for the ECP domain of inquiry, including guiding philosophy, principles, and content areas;*
- *To create the electronic and structural platforms that will foster the application and use of the developed and agreed-upon content;*
- *To significantly enhance the existing audience for the ECP content and user platforms, and*
- *To chronicle the uptake of the ECP content and user platforms.*

II.3. ECPIHE Guiding Principles

The initiative has four key principles that frame its approach. First, because ECPIHE is both highly embryonic and innovative, it is designed to be systematically planned and serendipitously opportunistic; that is, while having clear goals and a specified operational structure, it aims to be flexible and to capitalize on the unexpected opportunities it evokes. Second, while focused on IHEs, preparation for policy leadership is not solely their purview; rather, it takes place in many venues. But because IHEs can be potent catalysts for change, ECPIHE strategically begins its work here, with potential spillover to other venues and training modalities (e.g., on-line, in-service). Third, this work is suggestive and not prescriptive; all resources developed through ECPIHE efforts will be designed with the intention of adaptability. While creating templates and prototypes, ECPIHE intends that such resources will be adapted for diverse audiences, venues, and needs. Fourth, ECPIHE has no intention of making any aspect of this work proprietary; all products will be open-source and widely accessible.

II.4. ECPIHE Design and Timeline

The ECPIHE effort was designed in four phases, each with basic tasks: (i) ***Planning/Design/Data Gathering*** sought to create the information and organizational structure to advance the knowledge base and capacity to carry out the initiative; (ii) ***Document Development*** sought to create viable, adaptive documents that would support others' ECP work; (iii) ***Structural Analyses*** sought to understand diverse structures that could be used to enable ECP to take hold in multiple IHEs; and (iv) ***Implementation*** to institutionalize the documents

and structures within IHEs in the United States. Timelines associated with each phase are indicated below in Figure I.

Figure I: ECPIHE Phases and Timeline



PART III - ECPIHE PRODUCTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE (links to be added later, where appropriate)

III.1. Products and Accomplishments Associated with Phase I: Planning, Design, and Data Gathering

III.1.a. Formation of Advisory Group and Work Groups

Led by Sharon Lynn Kagan (Teachers College, Columbia University and Yale University) and Kathy Thornburg (University of Missouri), ECPIHE established an Advisory Group (AG) consisting of 16 professionals. The AG was then divided into two work groups, each of which carried out the bulk of the work through Skype, Zoom, on-line chats, commissioned work, and in-person meetings. Advisory and Work Group Members are listed below in Figure II:

Figure II: ECPIHE Advisory Group and Work Groups

<i>Content Work Group</i> Sharon Lynn Kagan	<i>Structure Work Group</i> Kathy Thornburg
Linda Espinosa	Susan Catapano
Kristie Kauerz	Bruce Fuller
Helen Raikes	Walter Gilliam
Aisha Ray	Cathy Grace
Adele Robinson	Gail Joseph
Catherine Scott-Little	Louis Manfra
Linda Smith	Beth Rous
Albert Wat	Valora Washington

III.1.b. Background Papers

In order to better understand the social context for the ECPIHE work, the initiative commissioned three papers, each with a different purpose.

Background Paper 1: Early Childhood Policy in Institutions of Higher Education: A Working Paper on the Current Status. The first paper was designed to discern the nature and scope of contemporary ECP efforts in the USA today. Written by Jacqueline Hawks, Ph.D., *Early Childhood Policy in Institutions of Higher Education: A Working Paper on the Current Status* examined 17 different IHEs that offer some form of ECP credential (defined as a minimum of 12 credits with coursework in child development and policy in addition to a field experience or internship). The analysis found that these efforts vary widely and “live” in many diverse schools and departments: Education, Human Development, Public Policy/Public Affairs, Law, and Social Work. Overall, the paper provided a cogent, accurate picture of ECP in IHEs today; as such it is a helpful benchmark from which to gauge the efficacy of our efforts over time.

Background Paper 2: Elevating Early Childhood Policy as a Discipline of Inquiry and Practice: Preparing the Next Generation of Early Childhood Policy Leaders. The second paper sought to discern what early childhood leaders deemed as essential content for emerging ECP programs and predicated on interviews with 21 leaders. Written by Stacie G. Goffin, Ed.D., *Elevating Early Childhood Policy as a Discipline of Inquiry and Practice: Preparing the Next Generation of Early Childhood Policy Leaders* determined that major agreement existed on the kinds of experiences prospective early childhood leaders needed; these included practical and theoretical coursework, richly augmented by internships and field-based interactions with policymakers. Findings from the analysis also indicated that a variety of communication skills are needed. In addition to the typical written and oral skills, those interviewed agreed that technical writing and grant writing skills were necessary.

Background Paper 3: Advancing the Field of ECP: Lessons from Other Fields. The third paper looked at how three emerging domains of inquiry — Black, Women’s, and Environmental Studies — became established as legitimate areas of study within American IHEs. Written by Jeanne L. Reid, Ed.D., *Advancing the Field of ECP: Lessons from Other Fields* suggested that these domains of inquiry became disciplines of study in many different ways and for different reasons, but that there were some similarities across the three. In all three cases, there was social imperative, foundation support, potential for a theoretical base and solid methodology, and organizational supports.

III.2. Products and Accomplishments Associated with Phase II: Document Development

III.2.a. Twelve Modules Related to ECP

To render the work associated with developing materials and content relevant to ECP, and to establish the suggested content scope, the Content Work Group created 12 modules. The modules were designed to enable individuals interested in the content to adapt the material as a session within an existing course in an IHE — in diverse disciplines and at diverse levels. The modules could also be used for policy training workshops or other professional development activities. The module topics are: (i) History of Early Childhood; (ii) Child Development; (iii) Unequal Childhoods, Racial Equity, and Early Childhood Policy; (iv) ECEC Landscape and Major Policies; (v) Practice and Pedagogy; (vi) Family and Allied Services; (vii) Theoretical Perspectives on Early Childhood; (viii) Implementation of Early Childhood Policy and Programs/Services; (ix) Research and Evaluation in Early Childhood Policy; (x) Policy Basics or Policy 101; (xi) Creating Policy: Timing and Advocacy; and (xii) Leadership in ECE. Each module is similarly structured and presents the following: session title, learning outcomes, content to be covered (usually in three to four parts), delivery method/s, application activities, and suggested readings.

III.2.b. Four Syllabi

Using the modules as the essential content, a sub-committee of the Content Work Group (Kagan, Kauerz, Ray, and Robinson) undertook the development of four course syllabi. Module content was discussed, debated, and reorganized into the four syllabi, with the goal of generating approval-ready courses that an individual could teach to upper-level bachelor's or master's students. The syllabi were designed so that each could be used independently or in concert with one another. When combined, all four syllabi could form a minor or even a certificate. The four syllabi are: (i) The Essentials: History, Child Development, and Equity; (ii) Early Childhood Education and Care Today: Examining Practices, Policies, and Key Issues; (iii) Early Childhood Education and Care: Policy, Leadership, and Policy Advocacy; and (iv) Early Childhood Education and Care Policy: Theory, Analysis, and Research. Each syllabus contains course goals; objectives; assignments; grade allocations; and information on 12 individual course sessions, including rationales and reading lists. Again, these documents are designed for adaptation, but in their entirety convey what the group felt would be a rich, thoughtful program of study for those interested in pursuing advanced work in ECP.

III.2.c. Internship Handbook

Predicated on rich experience, internships are considered to be an essential component of ECP training and professional development. To that end, an ECP Internship Handbook has been developed. It includes information on designing and implementing internships related to ECP, including examples of pre-requisites, eligibility criteria, and evaluation forms, and discusses the nature of internship agreements, the need for liability coverage, and mechanisms to oversee the internship experience to maximize its impact. The Internship Handbook also includes sample of

the types of internships that are available at federal, state, and local levels, as well as those in the private sector.

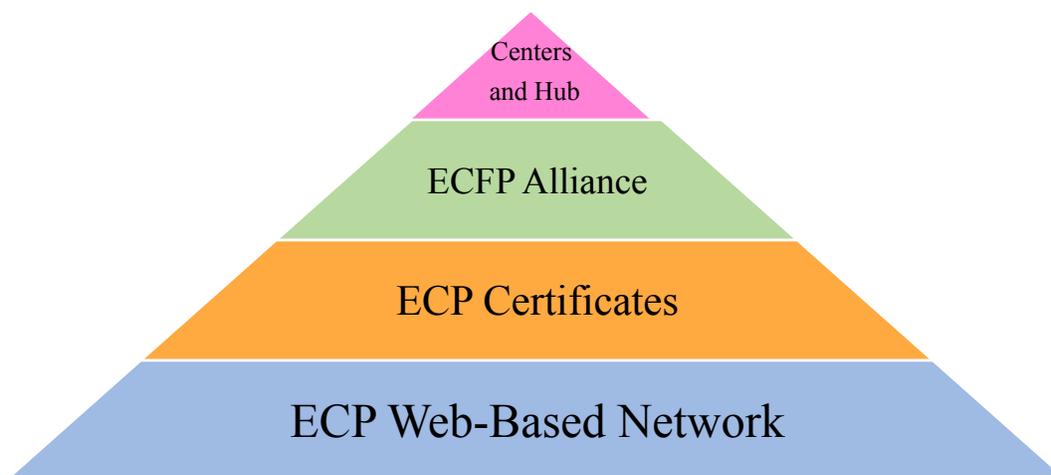
III.2.d. Faculty Guidance Handbook

Designed to be used by faculty at IHEs as they implement courses, seminars, curricula, and/or programs that focus on ECP, the Faculty Guidance Handbook provides an array of practical information. For example, it delineates important considerations regarding establishing programs, the nature of interdisciplinary work, establishing working collaborations, planning for joint programs, and the use of web-based technology to advance the study of ECP.

III.3. Products and Accomplishments Associated with Phase III: Structural Approaches

Four different approaches are being developed to provide a rich array of options for those interested in launching efforts to advance ECP in IHEs. Each approach offers different levels of engagement with, and commitment to, ECP. Ranging from, at the base of the pyramid, the most broad-based and least intense engagement via the Web-Based Network to, at the apex of the pyramid, the smallest number, but most intensely engaged individuals via the Centers and Hub, four ECPHE structural approaches are: (III.3.a.) ECP Web-based Network; (III.3.b.) ECP Certificates; (III.3.c.) ECFP Alliance; and (III.3.d.) ECP Centers and Hub, with each portrayed in Figure III and elaborated on below.

Figure III: ECPIHE Structural Approaches



III.3.a. ECP Web-Based Network

Prior to, and accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, a need to establish an on-line, interactive repository for all materials that have been developed by the initiative was clear. This web-based network will allow the materials to be easily shared with a wide audience of IHE faculty and

students. It is anticipated that the web-based network will be widely used, with users' commitment to ECP at a personal level, rather than an institutional level. To that end, the web-based network will provide an array of materials; its use will be monitored by a host/moderator who will establish and expand the web-based materials, as well as publicize their existence. In addition, the web-based network host/moderator may offer on-line interactive opportunities for the sharing of ideas and materials. Principles will be developed to assure that the website will meet quality, equity, and accessibility standards. ECPIHE Advisory Group (AG) members will comprise a small team that will conceptualize the Network and establish the process for selecting the most efficient, effective entity to operate it. ECPIHE will provide start up funds for the Web-Based Network. To sustain the web-based network beyond the initial work of the web-based network host/moderator, on-going curating of the site will be necessary.

III.3.b. ECP Certificates

Certificates function as one method of expediting the preparation of ECP leaders and represent a significant commitment on the part of IHEs — a second level of ECP engagement. The metrics of certification completion are typically course and/or competency-based, often being a combination of the two. Given field demands for practically-oriented training/professional development, the certificate is a highly attractive strategy. Serving as revenue elixirs, certificates represent the embodiment of a practical approach to achieving the very first goal of the entire ECPIHE effort: to prepare individuals to assume early childhood policy leadership roles. Highly idiosyncratic, certificates are as plentiful as they are diverse; they vary in the motivations of those who seek them (those wishing to add skills/competencies, but already have a BA, MA or Ph.D.; those who are seeking a short-term avenue to credential themselves; and/or those who wish to increase their salaries). Because these audiences vary, the nature of the certificates also must vary in rigor, depth, and content. Finally, the institutions that grant certificates vary, including IHEs, professional organizations, or bodies established primarily to grant certificates.

To stave this *mélange* and help standardize the content of the emerging ECP certificates, ECPIHE is developing a guidance document suitable for use by potential ECP certificate-granting institutions. Such a document will delineate the goals, purposes, and key principles attendant to the certificate. It will also address the recommended certificate content (with much of it based on the developed modules and syllabi described above in III.1.a.). Such content will be interdisciplinary in nature and include material related to: political science (e.g., policy processes and extant federal, state and local policies); sociology (e.g., social, racial, ethnic, income, and geographic inequities); and psychology (e.g., organizational, leadership, and human behavior). Moreover, the guidance document will likely recommend a field-based experience. The content will be augmented by adaptive structural recommendations that will guide the intensity of the experiences (e.g., number of hours, potential credits) and the nature of the experience (e.g., on-line versus in-person experiences).

III.3.c. ECFP Alliance

Respecting that IHEs differ and are likely to be increasingly fiscally pressed, an effective way to maximize efforts is to enjoin several IHEs in offering a joint on-line degree program. This represents a third level of intensity/commitment to ECP because each institution would not need to develop its own degree and fully staff an entire degree program, but could work together on-line with multiple institutions to offer a trans-institutional (degree and/or certificate) program that would be efficient and effective. A mechanism for this already exists in other fields via the Great Plains IDEA (Interactive Distance Education Alliance), which is providing in-kind technical assistance to ECPIHE and supporting the development of an Early Childhood and Family Policy (ECFP) focus within the Alliance. To bring this ECP Alliance to reality, ECPIHE will support faculty at the allied institutions as they pick up the lead in this effort.

III.3.d. ECP Centers and Hub

It is anticipated that some IHEs will wish and be able to establish their own individual ECP Centers/programs, the most intense level of engagement. It is assumed that these individual Centers will be degree-granting at the BA, MA, and Ph.D. levels. As presently envisioned, two Centers funded by this proposal will be launched, with special attention devoted to both engaging an HBCU, Native American, or Hispanic-serving IHE and to soliciting support from other funders to support additional Centers. Each Center will operate independently from the other(s) in accordance with its own institutional history, culture, and needs. Each will provide diverse types of degrees, with abundant opportunities/incentives to enroll diverse students. In addition, the two-funded Centers, while operating independently, will informally interact with other Centers in a Hub that will include representation from the Alliance and a limited number of other Centers with similar missions but supported by different funders. The ECPIHE-funded and non-ECPIHE-funded Centers will function as a loosely configured Hub, with one entity leading the Hub. The Hub will assist the Centers as they begin and then coordinate ECP activities of mutual interest and benefit to all Hub Centers. Given that support is likely to be needed during start-up, the provisional Hub will be lodged at Teachers College, Columbia, with the involved Centers determining its locus thereafter.

III.4. Products and Accomplishments Associated with Phase IV: Implementation

Phase IV, with its focus on implementation, is taking hold as this document is being produced. The current status of each approach is reported below.

Web-based Network: To support the Web-based Network implementation, ECPIHE will create a competitive RFP, with the successful bidder receiving supportive initial funds to establish the web-based presence.

ECP Certificates: To support the development of ECP Certificates, ECPIHE will develop a guidance document that will support those interested in launching a Certificate. The document will display certificate options, delineate the processes associated with certificate development. ECPIHE will provide technical support to those interested in creating and implementing ECP

certificates. Certificate work is being explored, both as an independent line of work, and as a corollary to the work of the Alliance and the Centers/Hub.

ECFP Alliance: To support the Alliance implementation, ECPIHE may provide fiscal support to participating universities. Such funds would enable faculty to: discern the content and structure of the 12-15 credits for the certificate and the 30 or 36 credits of the degree; develop courses (if different from the ones already prepared by ECPIHE); submit all of the paperwork through the many “hurdles” of IHE systems; and develop materials to publicize the availability of the degree. In addition, although relying heavily on telecommunications for this effort, a meeting in 2021 is tentatively planned (and Covid-19 dependent) to coordinate these efforts, given the complexity of nesting the ECP in diverse IHEs.

Centers/Hub: The development and implementation of the Centers and the Hub will be launched via an ECPIHE-driven RFP. Members of the Advisory Group will be involved in the development of the RFP and in the selection of recipients of ECPHIE grants to support IHEs who significantly advance their durable commitments to ECP. Criteria for the Hub will also be developed, supported by limited funding to advance the Hub’s early implementation efforts.

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