



# Moving Beyond Barriers to Articulation: Developing Agreements among Two- and Four- Year Institutions in Early Childhood Education

## Early Childhood Leadership & Policy Network

Correspondence may be addressed to Deborah J. Cassidy, djcassid@uncg.edu.

This study describes evidence that supports the development of articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions of higher education in early childhood education / child development. It discounts historical ideas and barriers that have prevented articulation agreements while suggesting that students transferring from 2-year AAS degree programs to 4-year BS or BA degree programs perform at comparable levels to traditional students entering BS or BA programs.

### Increased demand for 4-year degrees.

North Carolina is facing an increased demand for early childhood teachers with 4-year degrees. This is partially contributed to by an emphasis on increasing early childhood program quality in addition to the More at Four state pre-k program requiring 4-year degreed teachers with a Birth-Kindergarten (BK) license.

**NC is facing a demand for 4-year degreed early childhood teachers.**

**Teachers of diverse backgrounds needed.** In order to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse population of North Carolina, there is also a demand for more teachers of diverse backgrounds with 4-year degrees in early childhood education. Articulation agreements between 2- and 4-year universities support these efforts by creating a more efficient educational process that is accessible to a diverse student population. For example, at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro

(UNCG), transfer students are more likely to be of diverse backgrounds than are the native students. Overall, 36% of students transferring to UNCG from 2001 to 2005 from 2-year AAS programs were from diverse backgrounds. In contrast, only 24% of the native students were from diverse backgrounds.

### Student success documented.

UNCG has recently updated data that examines the success of transfer students within the B-K and Early Care and Education programs. The data recently compiled in the UNCG B-K program indicate that transfer students from AAS degree programs in Early Childhood Education (ECE) have Grade Point Averages (GPAs) comparable to the native students. Over a 5-year period the average GPA for senior transfer students was 3.27 and for native students 3.35. These data are very similar to earlier data from 1995 to 1998 indicating identical GPAs of 3.22 for transfer and native students at UNCG<sup>1</sup>. The transfer students also performed well in their transition junior year to the 4-year campus, although both groups had lower GPAs than did seniors. On average, the transfer student GPA increased from 2.72 in the 1999 study to 2.98 in the 5-year period ending in 2005. These data clearly indicate the success of community college early childhood transfer students in 4-year degree programs.

**Courses are comparable in content and rigor.** The data suggests that the rigor of the coursework in the AAS programs is sufficient to ensure student success at 4-year institutions.

Furthermore, community college ECE programs have recently revised their programs to ensure even greater rigor. Many courses now include information about children with disabilities and an even greater focus on families. All core courses are now taught by faculty with at least a Master's degree. Additionally, the AAS programs have adopted competencies similar to the North Carolina B-K Licensure Standards.

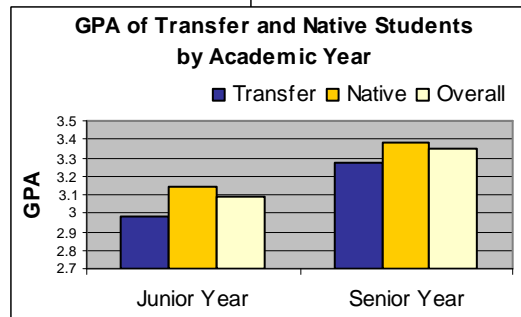
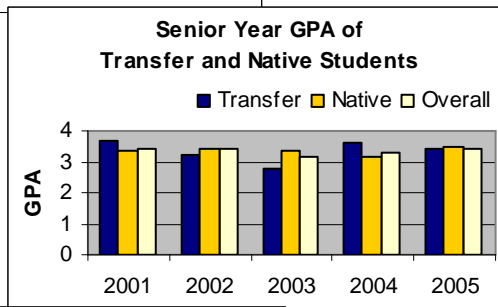
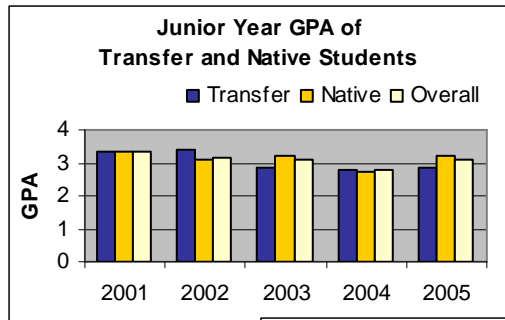
**Benefits of articulation agreements.** High quality articulation agreements provide benefits to students, universities, the early childhood field,

**Articulation agreements support a well educated and diverse workforce.**

and society at large.

Articulation agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education ensure better communication between institutions, an educational process that promotes continued education, and a new and diverse recruiting pool for universities. Articulation agreements also support a well-educated and diverse early childhood workforce that will serve children and families. High quality articulation agreements aim to meet the demand

for teachers with 4-year degrees in early childhood education to sustain high quality classroom environments for children. Articulation agreements create a workforce with higher education that leads to greater opportunities for teachers and improved salaries.



### Policy Directions

- Create high quality articulation agreements between 2- and 4-year early childhood programs in institutions of higher education that enable students to complete a B.S. degree in 4 years.
- Accept the 2-year degree in Early Childhood Education for transfer through a block agreement between 2- and 4-year institutions.

<sup>1</sup>Cassidy, D. J., Hestenes, L. L., Teague, P., & Springs, J. (2001). The facilitation of the transfer of credit between early childhood education/child development departments in two-and four-year institutions of higher education in North Carolina. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 22(1), 29-38.