Program History

For more than four decades, the community colleges have been the primary higher education system responsible for early childhood teacher preparation coursework (Early childhood education/Child Development). An essential component is a high quality campus children’s center that serves as a practicum/laboratory site for the instructional program and also serves low-income college students with young children. These college programs support ECE career education/workforce needs of the state and provide transfer opportunities for ECE students as well. The Chancellor’s Office provides coordination, policy work and technical support for the colleges to address the State’s need for effective, well-integrated programs in ECE. A State Advisory Committee helps guide recommendations to the Chancellor’s Office and other agencies.

Description

105 community colleges offer ECE instructional programs. The latest Accountability Report on Community Colleges (ARCC) listed ECE as awarding the second highest total number of certificates and degrees (awards) completed among career education programs in community colleges. Ninety remaining ECE children’s center/labs are the practicum sites for essential ECE teacher preparation, as well as for delivering critically needed services to low-income students. Low-income students rely on these centers/labs to gain access and to succeed in many different higher education fields. The Chancellor’s Office provides important state and federal information to colleges in ECE and technical assistance for the integration and support of instruction and campus labs. The Specialist works closely with colleges, state agencies and organizations on ECE policy and practices.

Students Served

It is estimated that annually more than 100,000 students are enrolled in ECE instructional programs and more than 10,000 student parents were being served annually in campus children’s centers/labs for years. Estimates are now showing that over 2000 fewer children are being served due to cuts in just the last three years. Most cuts occurred from general college funds and California Department of Education contract funds.

Appropriation for 2013-2014

ECE instructional programs are funded through FTES and many campuses apply for outside grants to provide support for the students, such as the Child Development Training Consortium and the CA Early Childhood Mentor Program. These California Department of Education (CDE) funded grants help with ECE student access and support.
Campus ECE centers/labs rely on multiple sources of funding that may include campus general funds, child care and development direct services subsidy contracts with the state (CA Department of Education/EESD), tax bail-out funds (25 CCDs per 1978 legislation), and parent/student fees. Because there is no dedicated funding source for these centers/labs, many have had their college general funds cut severely, most have been cut downsized and others have been eliminated completely in the last several years. CDE funds for subsidized child care services have also been decreased greatly since 2008. The Chancellor’s Office has oversight for only two small direct funding sources for child care/early childhood services: 1) about $9.2 million in CalWORKs child care (formerly $15 m), some of which is diverted to other CalWORKs services on campus; and 2) approximately $3.3 million in Child Care Tax Bailout funds (designated for 25 CCDs and formerly at $6.8 m).

Eligibility Criteria:
ECE instructional programs are among the top enrolled at community colleges. ECE practicum students and low-income student parents are the primary focus of the campus children’s centers/labs.

Critical Issues:
1. Funds to support campus centers/labs are seriously inadequate, causing many colleges to eliminate needed services, negatively impacting ECE instructional programs as well as eliminating access to college for many low-income students with children;
2. Campuses are involved in many initiatives impacting ECE teacher workforce preparation including the Quality Rating & Improvement work, integrating ECE competencies, and expanding articulation; and
3. The Curriculum Alignment Project (CAP) is a statewide, faculty-led effort to align a common core of 8 courses among community college ECE programs and this effort has led to 82 colleges completing alignment so far, as well as completing course identification (C-ID) and AS-T degrees (per SB 1440) in ECE. Campus ECE programs are among the highest achievers in developing these transfer degrees. Newly expanded curriculum alignment is addressing seven more ECE courses in addition to the original eight foundational courses in CAP.