

A photograph of a woman with curly hair, wearing a green top, sitting and reading a book to a young child. Both are smiling warmly. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor setting.

**EARLY
EDUCATOR
INVESTMENT
COLLABORATIVE**

Advancing ECE Workforce Compensation and Equity: Messaging Toolkit

Overview

The *Early Educator Investment Collaborative's* (The Collaborative) goal is to accelerate progress in the early childhood education field to provide recognition for the work the workforce already does and ensure early educators have the support they need to be well-prepared and appropriately compensated. To help us achieve our goal, The Collaborative explored the feasibility of certification at a national level for lead teachers. We learned that there is a demand for certification, but key issues around compensation and equity must be addressed before pursuing certification.

We are excited to share *learnings from this study* to inform next steps and support strategic investments in workforce compensation, benefits, and advancing equity for early childhood educators in the United States.

We invite you to share the results of the study with your networks using the assets and resources outlined in this messaging toolkit.



How to use this toolkit

The Collaborative developed this toolkit to equip partners and interested parties to create and share messages about the results of the feasibility study through:

- Unpacking the results and recommendations of the feasibility study
- Providing creative language, templates, publishable assets, tools, and resources to share key takeaways from this study

In this toolkit

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Introduction to the feasibility study

 You can use this overview to orient yourself to the feasibility study and to discuss it with your peers and followers.

In 2019, the Early Educator Investment Collaborative (The Collaborative) commissioned a nationwide feasibility study to assess the viability of a national, competency-based certification for lead teachers (NLTC) in early childhood education (ECE) in the United States. While the COVID-19 pandemic soon forced The Collaborative to put the study's research on hold as it shifted to [rapid response grants](#) to respond to the sector's urgent needs, it is now very pleased to share this summary of the study's results.

Results of the study

1 There is an appetite for national certification, but not until compensation and equity issues are addressed

Nearly three in four (74%) said they would be “very” or “extremely” supportive of an NLTC that increased pay for educators.

2 There is support for a focus on competencies

Stakeholders recognize the advantages of a competency-based certification because it:

- Allows educators to acquire and demonstrate knowledge through real-world practice, rather than solely relying on exams

- Helps clarify the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities required to effectively teach young children
- Benefits educators who are learning these elements for the first time by providing structured guidance and support through classroom-based experiences
- Allows experienced educators to showcase their existing knowledge and skills

3 There are conditions that need to be met in order to enable successful implementation of national certification

Stakeholders identified several current conditions in the ECE field that would need to be addressed before the successful implementation of national certification

Compensation

- Improving wages should be prioritized before introducing an NLTC
- An NLTC should include assurances related to compensation, benefits, and opportunities for professional advancement
- An NLTC system should be accessible to educators at low or no cost

Equity

- The cost of obtaining the credential emerged as a primary consideration, with stakeholders stressing the need for affordability or subsidies and funding
- Stakeholders raised concerns that the certification may primarily benefit white, advantaged teachers, exacerbating existing stratification within the ECE workforce and pushing out teachers of color
- The COVID-19 pandemic placed significant strain on the ECE workforce and exacerbated inequities within the field

Ready-to-use assets

💡 We would love to invite you to join us in posting and sharing the results of the study! We have created the following social media graphics and copy to support you in posting. The posts follow a suggested order below, but you are welcome to share any or all of them. Please tag us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).



Early childhood educators face extremely low wages, long working hours, and inconsistent qualification requirements across all **50 states.**



EARLY EDUCATOR INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE

[READ THE REPORT TO LEARN MORE](#)


Social post copy:

The Early Educator Investment Collaborative commissioned a study to assess the viability of a national, competency-based certification for lead teachers (NLTC) in the US and found that the demand is there but compensation and equity must be addressed first.

Read more about the path to certification at earlyedcollaborative.org/feasibility-study-nltc/

[Download Graphic](#)

74% OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS said they would be “very” or “extremely” supportive of an NLTC that increased pay for educators



EARLY EDUCATOR INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE

[READ THE REPORT TO LEARN MORE](#)

Social post copy:

A study from the Early Educator Investment Collaborative shows that the demand for a national, competency-based certification for lead teachers is there. Now it's time to meet that demand by shifting conditions in today's ECE field to ensure it's a success.

Read more about the demand for certification and how we can address the barriers to implementation at earlyedcollaborative.org/feasibility-study-nltc/

[Download Graphic](#)



Social post copy:

Along with support for national certification, respondents of the Early Educator Investment Collaborative’s survey named conditions in the ECE field to address before successful implementation is possible:

- Higher compensation
- Systemic racism and existing structural barriers in the field

Read more about the conditions for success at earlyedcollaborative.org/feasibility-study-nltc/

[Download Graphic](#)

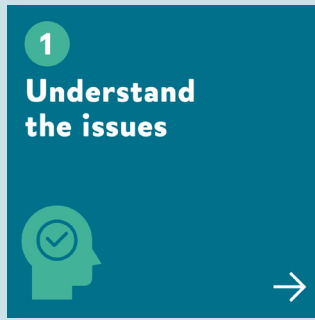


Social post copy:

There can’t be certification without increased compensation. Wages must increase to provide support to the field before introducing a national, competency-based certification for lead teachers.

Read more about the connection between credentialing and compensation at earlyedcollaborative.org/feasibility-study-nltc/

[Download Graphic](#)



Social post copy:

Get involved by talking to your network, advocating for fair compensation, equitable access to certification and professional development opportunities, and addressing systemic inequities in the field.


Learn more about how you can help at earlyedcollaborative.org/feasibility-study-nltc/

Download Graphic

Use these images to create a carousel post on Instagram or Facebook



How to create your own assets

 We have designed social media posts that we hope will be easy for you to use as they are. However, you know your peers and followers best. We welcome you to create your own messages or posts if it feels more natural to you. Here are a few framing recommendations we have used in crafting messages that are compelling and inspire action.

Aspiration: Lead with an ideal that society should uphold

Tap into a collective concern—ideally, using a tested message that speaks to shared values

Example: A future with equitable certification for early childhood educators is possible. And it starts with higher, livable wages.

Explanation: Explain how the issue works

Establish a mechanism or process at play, using explanatory techniques like examples or metaphors

Example: Qualification requirements are inconsistent across many states and educational settings, with some states setting no minimum qualifications at all. This model reinforces inequities.

Complication: Put some tension in the plot

Make social conditions or structures the “bad guys.” Paint these threats as important but not insurmountable

Example: We can’t let certification push out teachers of color. We have to take on harmful structural barriers and ensure that everyone can access the resources, support and opportunities for professional growth needed to meet the requirements of certification.

Implication: Point to solutions

Highlight equity-focused, collective approaches to addressing the problem

Example: Increasing compensation for the ECE workforce is the key to national certification that works. Let’s advocate for fair wages and equitable access to higher education.


Call to action: Point to tangible actions

Highlight small, concrete ways to advance solutions


Example: Vote for policymakers who support greater public investment for the early care and education workforce.





Platforms to amplify the message


 These are just a few places you can spread the message. Depending on your network, you might also consider utilizing more tailored options like e-newsletters or WhatsApp groups.

When deciding which platform(s) to post to, consider who needs to hear our message most and where they engage with content.

 **Facebook** A large percent of Americans have Facebook and check it at least once a day. It has the biggest user base of any platform, but the least organic visibility.

 **Instagram** A majority of millennials and Gen Z check Instagram at least once a day. IG Stories helps maximize virality of content, from the ephemeral to static. Influencers are valuable in this space.

 **Twitter** Ideal for news and customer service, Twitter is the home of decision-makers and thought leaders.

 **LinkedIn** A professional networking site that is reflective of the “white collar” workforce, but a growing platform for thought leadership and paid growth. This platform can offer a strategic way to build strong business partnerships.

Glossary of terms

Early Childhood Education Terms

- **Certification**

The voluntary process by which a non-governmental entity grants a time-limited recognition and use of a credential to an individual after verifying that they have met predetermined and standardized criteria. It is the vehicle that a profession or occupation uses to differentiate among its members, using standards, sometimes developed through a consensus driven process, based on existing legal and psychometric requirements.

- **Competency**

A piece of knowledge (K), a skill (S), or an ability (A) essential to perform a job effectively. In this case, it is essential to the practice of teaching and caring for young children.

- Knowledge is information that may be applied to practice.
- Skills are strategies or abilities that may be applied to practice.
- Abilities are the possession of the means to apply knowledge and skills to practice.

- **Early childhood lead teacher**

Educator of record and the decision-maker who is directly responsible for the instruction of children and supervision of staff in all types of ECE classrooms and care settings. They include the lead educator in classroom and center-based settings, center directors/administrators, and owner/operators and lead practitioners in home-based or family childcare settings.

Communications Terms

- **Platform**

The location, either online or in the real world, where paid or owned media content is placed or shared.

- **Asset**

An element of a complete creative product or campaign.

- **Call to action**

Messaging that encourages a viewer, reader, or listener to perform a specific act, typically taking the form of an instruction or directive. This is what you're asking your audience to do through your work.

