



The North Carolina Community College System led the Early Childhood Education Innovation Fund Project, which was established to support innovative strategies that expand access and improve student success in early childhood associate degree programs. Early childhood education had three important content areas as priorities for attention, including reducing barriers to learning, strengthening the early foundations of lifelong learning, and enhancing resources and capacities. To address these needs, the Growing Greatness Project worked with NC ACCESS faculty representatives from nine lead colleges and N.C. early childhood education partners to implement a one-year project with four specific objectives:

1. Incorporate an explicit and intentional emphasis on and alignment with N.C.'s early learning and development standards (*NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development*) and N.C. formative assessments to embed in N.C. early childhood education coursework
2. Provide a sequence of professional development opportunities for N.C. early childhood education faculty to support the use of current, evidence-based content and methods in coursework and programs
3. Update the program of study to support enhanced career pathways for early childhood education professionals
4. Increase pathways for early childhood education professionals through articulation and collaboration

Innovation Fund to Improve Access to Community College

PARTNERS



Innovation Fund to Improve Access to Community College

Major accomplishments of Growing Greatness

- Growing Greatness faculty partnered with NC Child Care Resource & Referral to distribute the updated *Foundations* document to Community College EC degree programs and a link to *Foundations* was posted on department websites.
- All courses are now aligned with NAEYC Standards, B-K standards, NC Professional Teaching Standards, INTASC standards and DEC recommendations.
- A copy of *Careers in Early Childhood, a North Carolina Directory 2015* edition was provided to each college along with an electronic link to the document. This document is to be used to support career exploration.
- Professional development was provided for faculty on the following topics:
 - CTE Career Pathways
 - Intensive Behavior Strategies in *Foundations*
 - Health Expectations in Child Care Centers
 - Evidence based practices to enhance activities and assignment resources
 - NC Early Childhood Teacher Assessment Tool
 - Articulation
 - Formative assessment in outdoor education
- Growing Greatness faculty worked with the Articulation Leadership Team and the Articulation Director hired by Child Care Services Association to expand opportunities for articulation.
- The team created a chart of EDU courses that articulate to BK programs.
- The team also engaged in discussions with NCCCS and high school articulation partners to ensure connections to ECE degree opportunities (CCP).
- Engaged ECE partners in discussions about increasing the use of college credits across systems and strategies (Ed2Career Summits).
- A focus group of business partners was held online with employers.
- Growing Greatness faculty worked to create textbook free course content.
- The team worked to expand accessibility (ADA compliance) with online course access by providing closed captioning for video resources.
- Growing Greatness faculty reached out to Head Start partners, and identified strategies to support their needs for workforce access to CDA credits and degrees.
- All core courses now have *Foundations* and Formative Assessment imbedded content.

The most important lesson learned in this project was that teamwork and collaboration is the key to success. All colleges participated in the work. Teams were seamless in the delivery of grant objectives and often worked with outside agencies to ensure the work of the grant was relevant to employers and the community. Additionally, relationships were strengthened by the work of the grant and the work with North Carolina's K-12 partners.

For questions about the Innovation Fund to Improve Community College Access Project, go to <http://earlylearningchallenge.nc.gov/activities/community-college-initiatives>. To learn more about North Carolina's Community Colleges, go to <http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/>.