

ECE as a Profession

Conversations with Intent **Facilitator's Packet**

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Created by:

Susan Titterton for Vermont Birth to Five
With contributions from Sherry Carlson, Dana Anderson,
and members of the Vermont ECE as a Profession Work Group

Based on:

Professionalizing Early Childhood Education as a Field of Practice
By Stacie Goffin, Redleaf Press, 2015

This packet includes:

- Facilitator Outline
- Menu of Questions to Choose From
- Participant Handout
- Sample Recorder Format
- Sample Email from Convener

With references to a separate document:

“Redirecting Early Childhood Education’s Developmental Trajectory—
Becoming a Recognized Profession” by Stacie Goffin (2017)

CONVERSATION WITH INTENT Facilitator Guide

Time: 60-90 minutes, depending upon group size and interest

Materials:

Sign-in sheet & nametags

Copies of participant handout OR pre-made charts with that content

Copies of Stacie's 2-pager (option to send out beforehand or distribute at end of meeting)

Pens & paper for jotting

(Option) "Other Important Thoughts" ("parking lot" chart)

(Option) item for center of circle to encourage "speaking to the center"

Decide ahead of time which question(s) chosen by the Work Group you will use:

I.6 What of ECE's past and present seem most important to preserve? Do we need to embrace new values? If so, what might they be?

II.3 What commonalities bind ECE together as a field of practice? How might these commonalities help create a profession with a common purpose?

II.6 What are the unique knowledge and skills that should define ECE as a professional field of practice? What makes this expertise distinctive from other child-serving professions?

III.2 What core principles and values should guide the field's decision-making about its future?

III.10 What immediate changes can we implement to begin operating from the future we want to create?

Once you choose, insert this question into the participant handout and/or put it on a chart to post.

GETTING STARTED—20 minutes

I. **Welcome everyone, one-sentence statement about purpose of meeting**

II. **Round of self-introductions, including: "Why I chose to participate..."**

III. **Share Some History**

Last year, a comprehensive look at Vermont's ECE professional development system asked...

Q: Does Vermont currently have the right Professional Development system to support the ECE workforce?

A: Consensus at that time was "no." In the process of this inquiry, many more questions were raised, including those around preparation, flexibility & fragmentation, and governance & authority.

Report Recommendations: (Titterton, 2016)

1. Tackle new questions, such as what the purpose of the system should be, whom it should serve, and where authority, governance and decision-making should lie.
2. Avoid inertia—doing nothing. Avoid reactive change—quick fixes.
3. Begin the work to establish ECE as a recognized professional field of practice. This last recommendation evolved from an exploration of the work of Stacie Goffin, a nationally known speaker and researcher on the topic.

In response to these recommendations, Building Bright Future's Early Learning & Development Committee directed that a Work Group be created to explore and share Stacie Goffin's work, including Conversations with Intent, as a way to surface the issues and to "take the temperature" of the field in Vermont on the topic of establishing ECE as a recognized profession.

IV. Explain Conversations with Intent

Today, we are together to have a Conversation with Intent, defined by Goffin as "an intentional conversation that allows us to think together about a future for ECE as a recognized professional field of practice." This type of conversation has a specific format and structure. It's a different type of conversation from those we typically have on a day-to-day basis. This conversation we have will inform the Work Group, as well as having value for us here today.

Introduce role of recorder: To capture areas of agreement, areas of difference, and underlying themes. Reporter will not identify who said what. Notes will be used to help Work Group make recommendations about whether to continue the exploration.

Introduce role of facilitator: To follow the structure, to keep the conversation focused on dialogue & inquiry, to help us all to understand the question differently and more deeply, to NOT move into advocacy or problem-solving, and to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Explain guidelines for this Conversation: (on chart or handout)

- Contribute your thinking & experience.
- There are no wrong answers.
- Listen to understand.
- Connect ideas and listen for patterns.
- Look for insights, & deeper questions.
- Focus on respecting others' perspectives and suspending judgment.
- Avoid problem-solving or advocacy for a personal agenda.
- Speak to the center of the group, rather than 1-to-1 back and forth.
- Okay to sit in silence for a bit.
- Okay to pass.

THINKING BY YOURSELF—5 minutes

- Self-reflection to prepare to enter the Conversation with Intent
- JOT on one or more of these questions. We will not share out. (Post on chart or use handout)
 - How committed am I to changing? What evidence do I have that I'm open to change?
 - What are my aspirations for ECE as a field of practice? What do I really want to create?

- How easy (or hard) is it for me to stay curious about another’s perspective and resist slipping into my own point of view?

THINKING TOGETHER—40 minutes

SET-UP

- Introduce the Question for Conversation ([Post on chart or insert into handout](#))
- Introduce these Questions to Facilitate Meaningful Dialogue ([Post on chart or use handout](#))
 - Deepening Understanding of Underlying Thinking
 - Can you please describe a bit more about X?
 - That’s an interesting thought. Where does it come from? What is it based on?
 - What in your experience leads you to that response?
 - Why do you think that thought is important?
 - What is the concern you’re trying to speak to?
- Tell participants these steps for their Conversation with Intent
 - Gather your thoughts
 - Each person in the room has about 1 minute to share some initial thoughts
 - After the round and before opening things up, pause 30 seconds to reflect on what we’ve just heard
 - Invitation to ask others inquiry questions to deepen understanding of what others are thinking/ what their words mean
 - Challenge ourselves to resist focusing on “fixing” the present system, rather imagine what a future system might look like for ECE as a field of practice
 - (As time allows) More sharing, dialogue, questions, expanding the exploration

CONVERSATION WITH INTENT

- **Opening Question:** “You have the opportunity to be the architect for ECE for 2030. What would be one design feature you’d like to see? What’s something that would be different from what now exists?” USE THE PROCESS DESCRIBED ABOVE
- **Focus Question:** USE A QUESTION FROM PAGE 1 OF THIS DOCUMENT & THE PROCESS ABOVE.

CLOSING—15 minutes

Shared Reflection on this Conversation with Intent ([Questions on chart or handout](#))

- What did you most appreciate about this conversation with intent?
- What patterns did you see emerging?
- What learning or insight do you take from this conversation?
- What questions were raised for you?

Note-taker shares out what s/he captured for agreement/difference/themes & asks “sound right?”

Thanks to participants and “here’s what will happen next through the Work Group…”

- 5-7 Conversations with Intent around the state
- November check-in meeting to share initial experiences and what we’re hearing
- December work session to look at what we’ve learned & formulate recommendations about whether the ECE field in Vermont appears interested in exploring further what it would mean for ECE to become a recognized profession

ECE as a Profession—Conversation with Intent Participant Handout

Conversation with Intent

This is defined by Stacie Goffin as "an intentional conversation that allows us to think together about a future for ECE as a recognized professional field of practice"

Guidelines for this Conversation with Intent

- Contribute your thinking & experience.
- Listen to understand.
- Connect ideas.
- Listen together for patterns, insights, and deeper questions.
- Focus on listening, respecting, and suspending judgment.
- Avoid problem-solving or advocacy for your personal agenda.
- Speak to the center of the group, rather than 1-to-1 back and forth.

Thinking by Yourself

JOT on one or more of these questions (no share out)

- How committed am I to changing? What evidence do I have that I'm open to change?
- What are my aspirations for ECE as a field of practice? What do I really want to create?
- How easy (or hard) is it for me to stay curious about another's perspective and resist slipping into my own point of view?

Thinking Together

a) The question for this conversation:

b) Questions for deepening understanding of underlying thinking:

- Can you please describe a bit more about X?
- That's an interesting thought. Where does it come from? What is it based on?
- What in your experience leads you to that response?
- Why do you think that thought is important?
- What is the concern you're trying to speak to?

Shared Reflection

Choose one of the following to respond to:

- What did you most appreciate about this conversation with intent?
- What patterns did you see emerging?
- What learning or insight do you take from this conversation?
- What questions were raised for you?

NOTE-TAKING TEMPLATE

(You might want to consider making this template available for note-takers on a shared Google Doc if you wish to record directly into that.)

Date:

Group & location:

Facilitator:

Note-taker:

Participants	Position in ECE
1. 2. 3. etc.	1. 2. 3. etc.

“Thinking Together” Question:

(Note: If group addressed more than 1 question, record notes for second question on a separate page.)

Points of Agreement	(notes here)
Points of Difference	
Common Themes	

Additional Comments *(optional)*:

Sample EMAIL TO INVITEES of your Conversation

NOTE: Please feel free to cut and paste to create a note that makes sense for your

Hello,

I am a member of a state-wide workgroup that is exploring the questions and possibilities related to transforming the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE) to a recognized profession. Given the current fragmentation of the field, the challenges of recruiting experienced and knowledgeable staff and what we know about quality experiences for children relying heavily on the preparation and professional development of those working with them, the time is right for thinking about the field of early childhood education in new ways.

Part of my commitment as a member of this workgroup is to reach out to others in the field and invite them to participate in a “Conversation with Intent”— “intentionally designed conversations to move ECE toward becoming a recognized profession” (Goffin). The workgroup, along with Vermont Birth to Five and Building Bright Futures will collect information from these state-wide discussions to identify common themes, questions and possible actions steps related to advancing ECE toward becoming a recognized field of practice.

I will be hosting a discussion on

DATE, TIME

LOCATION

I hope you will join this discussion as I think you would bring an excellent perspective to this work.

If you think you might be interested but would like to know more I would be happy to set up a phone meeting and provide you with more detail.

Meanwhile, Stacie Goffin who is a national leader in this work and has been working with VB5 and BBF since the spring of 2017 has presented two webinars on the topic of Professionalizing the ECE Workforce. The link below will bring you to the site for the webinars. Listening to one of the webinars may help inform your level of interest in contributing to the discussion.

<http://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/presenters/goffin-stacie/>

Thank you for considering participating in this important discussion.