

## **A History of ACCESS Work Toward an Accreditation System 1989 - 2004: Fifteen years of ACCESS accreditation work**

ACCESS members have been discussing the need for an accreditation system for associate level early childhood programs for many years. Here is a review of highlights from our newsletter archives.

1989

- The ACCESS membership “voted to pursue accreditation for our programs, either alone or through NAEYC.”
- ACCESS President Peg Chrichton publicly launched this effort in her comments to the Membership Expression session at the NAEYC annual conference. During her presidency she regularly polled our membership to confirm this effort as our top priority.
- The ACCESS Executive board began to discuss accreditation with NAEYC staff and to work with Sue Bredekamp and Marilyn Smith on a NAEYC Model of EC Professional Development document.

1990

- The NAEYC board established an ad hoc committee to explore the feasibility of developing associate level accreditation. Each of our subsequent presidents made accreditation a priority and confirmed this priority in our membership meetings.

1991

- ACCESS votes to co-sponsor the first NAEYC Institute for Professional Development.
- ACCESS conducted a member survey, confirming that this work remained a top priority for our membership. Lana Hostetler, then NAEYC President, visited our November ACCESS meeting and requested that ACCESS co-sponsor the first NAEYC Professional Development conference in Los Angeles, 1992. ACCESS members voted in support and decide to plan ACCESS events at the summer conference.
- Over the next few years our presidents worked with NAEYC staff on the first national Associate Degree Teacher Education Guidelines, the old "red book."

1992

- ACCESS members voted "no" on question of whether an approval system would meet member needs and supported continued advocacy for a full accreditation system.
- ACCESS summer and fall conference sessions focused on accreditation work. ACCESS President Peggy Chrichton, and board members Becky Gorton, Darlene Ragozzine, and Toni Ungaretti met with NAEYC staff members Barbara Willer, Sue Bredekamp & Julienne Johnson about the National Institute goals, including accreditation of associate degree EC programs.

1993

- ACCESS President Toni Ungaretti & Secretary Becky Gorton met with Sue Bredekamp and Julienne Johnson at NAEYC offices in Washington, DC during March to discuss accreditation.
- The ACCESS Board work plan lists Goal #3 as “continue to work for the establishment of a national accreditation system for associate degree programs.”

1996

- ACCESS-NAEYC session solicited participants for pilot study.
- ACCESS President Becky Gorton and Mary Duru began work on potential partnership to pilot accreditation. Sue Bredekamp, Darlene Ragozzine & Becky Gorton conducted a work session on using the new associate standards. They used this session to solicit programs for a pilot project.
- ACCESS members voted that we do not want "ownership" of the accreditation system, but do want "input" and an "organizational role."

1997

- ACCESS membership survey supported pilot project.

1998-2001

- The Pilot Study - ACCESS board member Barbara Nilsen used her sabbatical to develop a self-study, folio and review process to be used in a pilot project. Five associate degree programs participated in the pilot. NAEYC staff member Mary Duru and members of the NAEYC Professional Development Panel provided organizational support to the project. Grand Rapids Community College (Michigan) and Luzerne Community College (Pennsylvania) were recognized as meeting the standards tested in this first pilot study.
- ACCESS members formed a Program Approval System Work Group to respond to some of the issues raised during the pilot study. They were: Ruth Ann Ball, Kathi Bush, Carole Ellison, Jackie Hill, Alison Lutton, Barbara Nilsen, Rejean Schulte, Jan Shera, Bruce Stam, Linda Todd, and Toni Ungaretti. In the meantime, NAEYC revised the standards for baccalaureate programs, in keeping with the national shift toward performance assessments and student outcomes.

2002

- NAEYC initiated a Feasibility Study.
- ACCESS and NAEYC worked together on a one-year feasibility study, funded by the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation. NAEYC wrote the grant proposal and obtained the funding for this project. A Study Group met four times during 2002 to reach consensus about structure and procedures that would best support a respected, responsive and stable evaluation system. Recommendations were presented to the ACCESS and NAEYC Governing Boards for their approval during the summer of 2002. Both boards supported the recommendation that developing an associate degree early childhood education program accreditation system is feasible. Details on the roles each organization would play in an accreditation system were not resolved.

- The project Study Group included Barbara Nilsen (ACCESS board member and lead person on system development and pilot), Bruce Stam (ACCESS President during the Feasibility Study), Alison Lutton (ACCESS President-Elect during the study), Toni Ungaretti (Johns Hopkins University, past ACCESS president), Christina Lopez Morgan (California Associate Degree faculty member from NAEYC Governing Board), Mary Duru (NAEYC staff), Marilou Hyson (NAEYC Staff), Mark Ginsberg (NAEYC Executive Director), and Nancy Barbour (NAEYC Professional Development Panel, participant reviewer in initial pilot).

#### 2003

- The ACCESS Board assisted with the development of and endorses new NAEYC associate standards; voted to support feasibility of associate degree accreditation system and “partnership” with NAEYC.
- NAEYC and ACCESS worked together to revise NAEYC associate degree standards and bring them in line with the new initial/baccalaureate and advanced/graduate standards. Workgroup members were: Mary Duru (NAEYC staff), Marilou Hyson (NAEYC staff), Nancy Barbour (NAEYC prof. dev. panel & NAECTE member), Alison Lutton (ACCESS President), Rejean Schulte (ACCESS member) and Camille Catlett (ACCESS member).
- Both the NAEYC and ACCESS boards voted to confirm that an accreditation system for associate early childhood degree programs is needed and is feasible. The ACCESS board voted to support a "partnership" with NAEYC in this effort. However, the NAEYC governing board declined to support a partnership, instead creating an ad hoc committee to examine policy implications. We have no recognized organizational collaboration on this project at this point. The NAEYC governing board voted that this is within their organizational mission and committed \$100,000 toward implementation pending an external funding match. NAEYC staff members are now working as vocal advocates in the national arena, promoting the need for associate level accreditation and pursuing funding. NAEYC and ACCESS leaders are working together to present conference sessions and promote this effort. In November 2003, ACCESS contributed \$5,000 toward the NAEYC accreditation initiative.

#### 2004

- ACCESS board writes letter of support and contributes funds to NAEYC associate accreditation project.
- In January, ACCESS wrote a letter of support for NAEYC's funding efforts. In February, ACCESS and NAEYC presented a session on standards and accreditation at the National Association of Community College Teacher Education Programs (NACCTEP) conference in San Francisco. In April, NAEYC obtained foundation funding and identified four states that have committed funds and energy to pilot the new standards and process. ACCESS will continue in a supportive, advisory role as NAEYC develops the accreditation system and criteria. In accordance with our 1996 vote, ACCESS seeks "organizational input", but not "ownership" of the associate degree accreditation system.