

**Closing Plenary: Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium (CCEEPRC)  
2017 Meeting Reflections and Next Steps for the Field 3.2.17**

**1. Descriptive Information**

<p><b>Closing Plenary</b></p> <p>Selected meeting attendees shared insights and observations from CCEEPRC meeting, reflecting different perspectives (e.g., CCEEPRC veteran, new member, state administrator, federal partner).</p>	<p><b>Facilitator</b> Dr. Amie Lapp Payne, President, Child &amp; Family Solutions</p> <p><b>Presenters</b> Dr. Bentley Ponder, Director of Research and Policy Analysis, Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning</p> <p>Dr. Jim Elicker, Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Purdue University</p> <p>Emisha Pickens-Young, Doctoral Candidate, Instructional Leadership &amp; Academic Curriculum, Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education at University of Oklahoma-Tulsa</p> <p><b>Scribe</b> • Sarah Daily, Child Trends</p>
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**Summary of Key Issues**

The closing plenary was led by three Consortium participants who shared their reflections on the major themes and take-aways they identified during the course of the meeting.

Jim Elicker reflected on what the CCEEPRC conference has meant to him over the years. He started his career as a Head Start teacher and Education Coordinator and felt CCEEPRC was the catalyst that helped him bridge his early career as a practitioner to his career as a researcher. This conference allows participants the opportunity to network with researchers who are working on topic areas we may not be able to explore deeply in their own work. For the 2017 conference in particular Dr. Elicker reflected that while he is doing evaluation work that involves quality improvement, he is not often able to explore coaching as much as he might like. The coaching sessions that highlighted new and innovative ways to think about coaching were invaluable to him this year. He also commented that several sessions during the conference renewed his interest in topics related to the professionalization of the early care and education workforce. As a final comment Dr. Elicker reflected on Dr. Marty Zaslow's powerful ability to synthesize disparate findings from different areas of research and articulate emerging trends in ways that have helped everyone at CCEEPRC to think about future research.

Emisha Pickens-Young spoke from her perspective as both new to CCEEPRC and as a previous Head Start teacher now pursuing a Ph.D. Ms. Pickens-Young encouraged participants not to forget about the perspective of teachers and providers. She encouraged researchers to get teachers' buy in and to take the time to sit down and explain the importance of being thoughtful in the surveys or paperwork they complete as part of a study. She also encouraged participants to ask teachers for their input on the research, to ask about what they want to know, and to come back

to them with findings that may be relevant to them and their work with young children. Ms. Pickens-Young also discussed the challenges she perceived in supporting the quality of infant and toddler care, emphasizing how few higher education programs provide a focus on infant/toddler care and the field placements to support the future workforce. Her final reflection was related to considering the conditions and contexts with which the early care and education workforce works. Not only thinking about teacher wages and mental health, but also understanding the workplace context, such as the dynamics of team teaching in Head Start and other center-based settings, and how these contexts may impact instructional practices.

Dr. Bentley Ponder closed the panel with two reflections about the translation of research-to-policy and considerations for weighing our role amidst a policy/politics dynamic. In his job Dr. Ponder wears two hats as the Director of Research and as a Policy Advisor at the Georgia Department of Care and Learning. He noted how this conference helped to confirm for him that he - we - should move forward considering just one hat – one that both designs rigorous research, but also designs research that is pertinent to policymakers. He also articulated his appreciation for the *Research-to-Policy Translation for Generating Evidence Based Child Care* plenary session, which eloquently articulated a conceptual shift in our thinking about how we conduct research. This session also helped to sum up a clear role for our work as researchers working in a policy/political context, which is not to say what is “right” or “wrong” but to be sure we can understand and articulate the impact of specific policy choices.

The panelists and several audience members echoed a sentiment of gratitude for how the Consortium has helped bring together a network of researchers who are passionate for both child development and working on a problem focused approach to improving quality experiences for children and families.