The Peer Review Project is collaboration between the Child Development Division, Northern Lights Career Development Center and Mary Johnson Children’s Center.
Introduction to the Early Childhood Educator Licensure through Peer Review Project

The Early Childhood Educator Licensure through Peer Review Project (PRP) exists to increase the number of licensed early childhood teachers working with young children in Vermont. Having a licensed teacher in the classroom or other early care and education environment enables early childhood programs to engage in partnerships with school districts to provide preschool services that qualify for public education funding, and it is a key ingredient in assuring quality experiences for children.

This guide is intended to be a resource for potential and current PRP participants and other interested parties who want to know more about how the project assists early childhood professionals in becoming licensed teachers.

Peer Review
Peer Review is an approved process for those who hold at least a bachelor’s degree, have a minimum of three years of experience in the field and who have acquired the knowledge and skills needed to meet the competencies, requirements and Principles for Vermont Educators through professional experiences and study. For Peer Review, professional development experiences may include workshops and other non-credit bearing activities (For more in-depth information, consult the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) Peer Review Handbook which is available on the web at http://education.vermont.gov/licensing/alternate-route or contact jessica.kobb@state.vt.us, 802-479-7461).

Professionals that are already licensed teachers in another endorsement area may want to first undergo a Transcript Review with the Agency of Education to get the ECE endorsement. For Transcript Review only professional development that is credit bearing can be considered. These must be documented by an official college transcript. Information about Transcript Review is available on the Vermont Department of Education website. http://education.vermont.gov/licensing/application/transcript-review

The ECE Endorsement
The Early Childhood Educator Endorsement covers a broad range of developmental and chronological age levels, from birth to grade 3. Some participants want the full endorsement; others want to limit their licensure to age 3-5, or birth to age 5, or age 3 to grade three, etc. If you think you want a limited license, discuss this with your mentor or Peer Review workshop leader. You may be able to design your portfolio so that it covers the age range you want included in your teaching license. You can indicate to the panel who reviews your work that you wish to limit your license to a certain age range, but it is up to the panel to recommend any license limitations.
The Model

The project includes 3 components.

1. A 10-month hybrid course that enables working early childhood educators to successfully complete the peer review process and apply for an educator license with early childhood endorsement.
2. Intensive individual technical assistance and coaching by a mentor so participants can successfully complete their portfolios and prepare for their Peer Review.
3. A commitment to identify resources to support the success of child care professionals pursuing peer review.

This effort will be a state-wide project combining online learning with 4-5 face to face meetings over the course of 10 months. Exact locations of the face to face meetings will be determined by the participants, instructors and the project mentors.

The documentation and reflection of prior learning /experience; mentoring; and professional development are the key elements of this project.

- **Reflection of Prior Learning and Experience**
  One of the cornerstones of the Peer Review process is documenting prior learning and experience in a way that assures the competencies expected of a licensed early childhood educator. As part of the project/course participants will engage in reflective practice with peers and instructors about how professional experience matches the competencies and requirements of a licensed teacher. Individual written reflections and small and large group discussions afford an opportunity to articulate what participants know and are able to do as a teacher of young children. These reflections are the foundation of the Peer Review portfolio that will be submitted at the end of the project.

- **Advisement**
  Each participant will have a mentor to work with. The mentor will provide individual support and advising. The mentors are experienced professionals who are knowledgeable about the Peer Review process and the ECE endorsement. Mentors will advise and support educators as they assess their experiences and compile a portfolio of evidence of their professional knowledge and skills as teachers of young children.

- **Professional Development**
  Participants will provide a copy of their college transcripts when applying for the project. These transcripts will be reviewed by the instructor, mentors and advisors to the project. The course instructor and the mentors will help develop a list of recommended professional development experiences to complete in order to be better able to demonstrate having met the ECE competencies. It is important to remember that for Peer Review, professional development experiences may include workshops and other non-credit bearing activities.
The project will keep participants informed about learning opportunities available through Vermont’s Northern Lights Career Development Center, the Vermont Child Care and Careers Council, area professional development organizations, the Higher Education Collaborative – Early Childhood Program, and higher education institutions throughout the state.

**Timeline (estimated) for the 2015 Project**

- December 1, 2014- January 12, 2015th, Applications to the project accepted
- January 21, 2015 Participants notified
- February 2, 2015 Project commitment letter and $100 fee due to reserve space
- March 2015, Ten month project begins
- December 1, 2015 Course ends
- January 4, 2016 Mentor support ends

Portfolios submitted on or before January 4, 2016.

**Fees**
The fee for enrolling in the Northern Lights Peer Review support project/course is $100.

Fees for becoming licensed through the Peer Review process are set by the Vermont Agency of Education:

- $40 to apply to the Agency of Education for Peer Review and for eligibility determination
- $135 for Praxis Core–mathematics, reading and writing (Educational Testing Service sets this fee. Tests can be taken multiple times if needed and fees are collected each time the test is taken.)
- $1200 for the actual peer review; due upon submission of portfolio
- $140 for a Level I license that is valid for three years

$1515 for a Level I early childhood educator license

- These fees are subject to change

Your instructor or mentor will assist you in applying for a $500 grant from the Child Development Division to help defray the cost of your Peer Review fee (this grant is only available to those working in a community-based licensed or registered early childhood setting).

**Applying to the Early Childhood Educator Licensure through Peer Review Project**

(*please note! you can go through Peer Review without being part of the Northern Lights project- contact Jessica Kobb, AOE, jessica.kobb@state.vt.us for information*)

In order to be considered for the Northern Lights Peer Review Project applicants must have:

- at least three years of experience working with children in the birth to 5 year old age range
- either a baccalaureate degree (BA or BS) or higher, or a valid or expired teaching license
- regular access to the technology needed to participate in the on-line portion of this course
- be interested in attaining a VT teaching license with an endorsement in Early Education.
These criteria are based on the Agency of Education Requirements, the funding requirements and what we have learned about the type of knowledge and background needed to be successful in achieving licensure through Peer Review.

Those currently employed in an early childhood setting will receive priority for course enrollment.

If you meet these basic requirements, complete the application and enclose a current resume and a copy of all college transcripts (you do not need original transcripts for this application) and send the documents to the Northern Lights project coordinator:

Sherry Carlson ~ 380 Round Barn Road ~ Ferrisburgh VT ~ 05456
You will receive notification of acceptance to the project by email on or before January 21, 2015

Once You Are In The project

- All participants must have an email address, and check it frequently. Email and the online discussion forum are the primary means of communication between the instructor, mentors, and participants
- All Peer Review participants must take the Praxis Core Pre-Professional Skills Tests in reading, mathematics and writing, or qualify for a waiver before submitting their portfolio. Although many other endorsement areas require successful completion of a Praxis II Subject Assessment, candidates seeking the ECE endorsement do not have to take a Praxis II assessment at this time. Currently, waivers are granted for the Praxis Core if you can provide evidence that your SAT or GRE scores are above 1100, with no less than 500 in each area, or ACT scores of 22 or higher in English and Math. If you completed your SAT’s before 1995 please check the VT Agency of Education for information about scores.
- It is required that anyone seeking licensure through the Peer Review process attend a Peer Review Clinic led by the Agency of Education’s Peer Review Consultant. Your instructor will schedule a clinic during a regular class meeting. You may also attend one of the Peer Review clinics at the Agency of Education in Berlin.
- Collect and track of all of your professional development experiences. Save and organize certificates of completion, transcripts, assignments, course or workshop descriptions, course syllabi, and any other documentation related to the professional development that you want to put towards your licensure.
- You are expected to complete the course/project online requirements as well as attend at least four state-wide face to face meetings. Your mentor will schedule regular meetings with you over the first 10 months of the program. These may be face to face meetings and/or telephone meetings. Email support is also provided by your mentor.
Student Teaching and Practicum Requirements

Candidates for Peer Review are required to demonstrate “experiential placements at both the birth to 5 and 5-8 age levels. One placement shall be student teaching and the other a practicum, or the equivalent. A practicum is defined as a minimum of 60 clock hours of supervised experience. A student teaching experience is defined as at least 12 consecutive weeks of a supervised experience. If you are applying for a limited license, these requirements may differ; you should check with your mentor.

If you work in an early childhood setting, you may be able to use your work experience as an equivalent to student teaching if you can document that you’ve been supervised by a qualified practitioner. Practical experience may be gained through coursework or professional development that involves hands-on experiences and observation in a classroom or other early childhood setting and is part of your grade or workshop requirement. Your mentor will work with you to identify appropriate student teaching and practicum experiences and equivalencies. It is important to remember that both ends of the age range must be covered in the student teaching/practicum experience. In other words, if you use your work setting as a preschool teacher as evidence of student teaching, you must show practicum experience in the K-3 grades; or vice versa. Remember, if you are applying for a limited license, these requirements may differ; you should check with your mentor.

Resources

Vermont Agency of Education websites www.state.vt.us/educ/

- Educator Licensing
  http://education.vermont.gov/licensing

- Alternate Licensure Route (Peer Review) and the Peer Review Handbook
  http://education.vermont.gov/licensing/alternate-route

- Vermont Higher Education Collaborative (Early Education and Early Childhood Special Education)
  http://www.vthec.org/programs/early-childhood-licensure/

- Core Teaching Standards

  ▪ Early Childhood Educator Endorsement Competencies
    http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Rule-5440_Supplement_A_Licensing_Endorsements.pdf#page=40
- Vermont Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities

- Educator Testing Information: Praxis
  [www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/licensing/testing.html](http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/licensing/testing.html)
  [www.ets.org/praxis](http://www.ets.org/praxis) --for information on Praxis, tests at a glance, and study guides for purchase

Northern Lights Contact Information
- Sherry Carlson, Northern Lights Consultant, scarlson380@comcast.net
- Project Instructor/Mentors Heather Duhamel and Susan Torncello
- Mentor Jen Severance

Agency of Education Contact Information
Jessica Kobb, AOE, [Jessica.Kobb@state.vt.us](mailto:Jessica.Kobb@state.vt.us)