



**ANNOUNCEMENT: ELS/KS-14#02
C-14 #03
OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT & EARLY LEARNING
BUREAUS OF CERTIFICATION AND
EARLY LEARNING SERVICES**

ISSUE DATE: April 22, 2014
EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately
SUNSET DATE: Ongoing

SUBJECT:	Clarification Regarding Degrees Earned from Business, Technical and Trade Schools
TO:	Regional Key Directors, Managers and Child Care Certification Staff
FROM:	Barbara G. Minzenberg, Ph.D.  Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this announcement is to:

- 1) Provide clarification to Regional Key staff in making determinations for Career Lattice placement, STARS Designation, and Education and Retention Awards (ERA) when an individual has a specialized associate degree from a business, technical or trade college; and
- 2) Provide clarification to Child Care Certification staff when evaluating staff qualifications under the regulations found at § 3270.34 relating to Director qualifications, § 3270.35 relating to Group supervisor qualifications, § 3270.36 relating to Assistant group supervisor qualifications for child care centers and at § 3280.34 relating to Primary staff person qualifications for group child care facilities for individuals with a specialized associate degree from a business, technical or trade college.

BACKGROUND:

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) identified a need to provide clarification to Child Care Certification and Regional Key staff regarding the acceptance of Associate of Specialized Business (ASB) or Associate of Specialized Technology (AST) with a focus in Early Childhood Education (ECE).

Currently the Keystone STARS program does not recognize ASB or AST degrees with a focus in ECE as eligible degrees on the Career Lattice. Additionally, there has been inconsistent career advisement provided to practitioners who are seeking or who have obtained these types of degrees and how the degrees relate to the Keystone STARS program. Lastly, Child Care Certification staff recognize various educational degrees, including associate's degrees, when evaluating staff qualifications for facility director, group supervisor and assistant group supervisor.

DISCUSSION:

One indicator of high quality early childhood programs is the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment of its teaching staff. Children benefit most when their teachers have high levels of formal education and specialized early childhood professional preparation.

For the early learning community, the Pennsylvania Keys to Quality Early Learning Career Lattice is a guide to the education levels required for positions in the early care and education field. The Career Lattice encourages practitioners to attain credentials and degrees and to plan their educational pathway according to the position that they are interested in attaining.

Child care regulations at § 3270 and 3280 state that an acceptable option to meet the staff qualifications for director, group supervisor, assistant group supervisor or group child care home primary staff person is “*an associate’s degree from an accredited college or university in early childhood education, child development, special education, elementary education or the human services field ...*” The associate’s degree must be in combination with a specified number of years of experience working with children.

The accreditation of an educational institution, including business, technical and trade schools can be verified via the US Department of Education’s website at http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg6.html. Many Pennsylvania business, technical and trade colleges fulfill the criteria of accrediting bodies at this website. Additional information about the accreditation of an individual institution can be found by searching <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>.

To continue to encourage practitioner participation in Keystone STARS and to expand relevant degrees listed on the Career Lattice, OCDEL is adding ASB or AST ECE degrees offered by accredited business, technical and trade colleges. If a business, technical or trade college is accredited by an accrediting organization listed on the previously referenced website, OCDEL will recognize ASB or AST ECE degrees on the Career Lattice. Additionally, Child Care Certification will recognize such degrees as meeting the requirements specified in the regulations relating to staff qualifications.

In order to ensure consistent assignment to the Career Lattice by Regional Keys:

- Effective immediately ASB and AST ECE degrees will be recognized on the Career Lattice at Level IV.
- If the business, technical, or trade college has a signed program-to-program articulation agreement with another accredited institution of higher education offering an Associate in ECE or Baccalaureate in ECE or Child Development, the degree will be placed on Career Lattice Level V.
- Courses offered by business, technical or trade schools with accredited programs identified on the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) website at www.pheaa.org by school name and program code will be eligible for payment through the Rising STARS Tuition Assistance Program. The PHEAA code for business, technical and trade schools offering an approved ASB or AST ECE is 7B – Early Childhood Education. This information can be accessed on the PHEAA website by selecting the State Grant Program link under Funding Opportunities then selecting the State Grant Program Manual from the list of Documents and Forms.
- Effective July 1, 2014 ASB and AST ECE degrees will be eligible for Education & Retention Awards.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Please review this announcement with appropriate staff and implement the program policy clarifications.
2. OCDEL and the PA Key will review Career Lattice Materials and Resources to ensure this clarification is updated on all relevant materials.
3. OCDEL and the PA Key will post appropriate clarifying information to the PA Key’s website.
4. Child Care Certification regional offices will review this information with staff at future staff meetings and questions about this information should be directed to a supervisor or regional director.