

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Erikson Institute announces \$6 million dollar gift for new Early Teaching and Learning Academy



Chicago, April 12, 2021 — Erikson Institute, a graduate school specializing in child development and early childhood education, is proud to announce a new \$6 million gift from an anonymous donor. The gift will fund the **Early Teaching and Learning Academy**, which will bring all of Erikson’s Professional Development (PD) expertise under one umbrella to provide a range of high-quality training for teachers and professionals that will improve classroom teaching and student learning.

“The Academy” will utilize a comprehensive approach to PD and address the diverse needs of educators and children in under-resourced communities across the state over the next three years. The PD offerings will support educators and early childhood practitioners serving children from birth to age 8, and will have a focus on kindergarten readiness—a key priority in Illinois.

Providing quality professional development to educators and early childhood practitioners has been core to Erikson’s expertise for more than 50 years. With this new gift, Erikson will draw upon its decades of experience

of offering professional development in language and literacy, math, technology, special education, dual language, and social emotional learning, and create a new, integrated approach with a strong evaluation component— all rooted in developmentally-informed and relationship-based reflective practice. The cross-disciplinary work will support development of the "whole teacher" and the "whole child" to assist the State of Illinois in its efforts to ensure all children are sufficiently prepared physically, socially, and cognitively during the critical first years of formal schooling. The PD options will be available in-person, remote, and hybrid.

“Given Erikson’s long history of supporting early childhood educators and administrators with engaging professional development opportunities, it is our distinct honor to receive this generous gift that allows us to create ‘The Academy’ and expand this important work,” said **Dr. Jie-Qi Chen**, the Founding Executive Director of the Early Teaching and Learning Academy. “We will study the processes and outcomes of the Academy’s PD intervention. Our objective is clear—ensuring our youngest learners have an equitable start to their education.”

“The entire Erikson community is incredibly grateful to the anonymous donor, whose gift underscores the confidence the donor has in Erikson and particularly, in the expertise of our faculty and professional development staff,” said **Elenne Song**, chair of Erikson’s Board of Trustees. “The creation of the Early Teaching and Learning Academy comes at a time when children and families need the support of Erikson-prepared educators more than ever before.”

To interview an Erikson expert in early childhood development, infant/early childhood mental health, or early education, please contact Kamaria Morris at kmorris@erikson.edu or call 773-454-3590.

For more information, please visit www.Erikson.edu

***Erikson Institute** educates, inspires, and promotes leadership to serve the needs of children and families. We are the premier graduate school dedicated to child development. We provide direct services to our community’s children and families. We are leaders in influencing early childhood policy. We work tirelessly every day so that all children can achieve optimal educational, social, emotional, and physical well-being. At Erikson Institute, we know that investing in the early years of children will last a lifetime.*

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