



Policy recommendations from the  
2019-2020 Barbara Bowman Leadership Fellows

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**Erikson Institute**

Early Childhood Leadership Academy



2019-2020 Barbara Bowman Leadership Fellows

Named after one of Erikson's co-founders, Barbara Taylor Bowman, the Barbara Bowman Leadership Fellows program is designed to enrich the perspective and enhance the capacity of diverse child advocates who are committed to advancing racial equity through early childhood policy.

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# Special Acknowledgements



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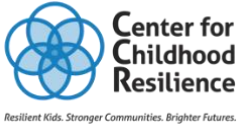
## **Barbara Taylor Bowman**

We are honored to have the program named after one of Erikson Institute's founders, Barbara Taylor Bowman. Barbara's legacy as an education activist, policy adviser, and early childhood practitioner matches the characteristics of the fellows participating in this program. Furthermore, her dedication to ensuring that diversity and equity are mutually reinforced provides the framework that supports the entire program experience.



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# Partner Organizations



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# Workforce Funding Strategy

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## PROBLEM

To ensure the best outcomes for children and families, early childhood programs must employ and retain highly trained early childhood educators. Unfortunately, due to inadequate support, the early childhood education workforce has been severely under-compensated. As a result of these low wages, educators and early childhood programs are challenged with making ends meet at home. Providers are struggling to function due to resulting workforce instability and shortages. Making poverty-level wages is stressful and teachers cannot deliver their best when under stress. Low wages also lead to higher turnover, which disrupts continuity of care, and ultimately compromises quality. If this trend is not disrupted and reversed, it will lead to a crisis that will undermine the development and high-quality early learning experiences for children.

## CAUSE

A survey in 2018 (Whitebook, 2018)<sup>1</sup> found that 50 percent of Illinois early childhood educators are currently receiving public income supports such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These findings indicate a lack of compensation parity, when compared to early elementary educators. This is one of many factors that contribute to an early childhood system struggling to function due to instability and shortages in the workforce.

Other causes of these low wages are attributed to the inconsistent regulations dictated by multiple funding streams and vary depending on setting, even

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<sup>1</sup> Whitebook, M., McLean, C., Austin, L.J.E., & Edwards, B. (2018). Early Childhood Workforce Index-2018. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

though the work is the same (Sarver, 2020).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, research has shown that state policy focused on sustainable compensation parity will most likely result in positive outcomes in pre-k quality measures (Barnett, 2017).<sup>3</sup>

Public perception of the work is another factor. While there has been much progress regarding the general public's understanding of the importance of high-quality early care and education, there is still a widespread notion that the love and attention needed by infants and toddlers does not require a qualified professional.

## SOLUTION

The early childhood education workforce must be elevated to a priority profession benefitting all children, not just birth to age five as a traditional concept, but recognized as an influence from birth to age 18 now that research is showing outcomes that reach into adulthood (Board on Children, 2015).<sup>4</sup> Washington State's early childhood system is a model for Illinois to consider. Based on a state commission recommendation in 2016, Washington consolidated all programming from birth to adolescence under a cabinet-level agency that oversees the delivery of services to children and families. The new Department of Children, Youth, and Families is the most comprehensive unified model across the country covering a child from birth through adolescence. It is focused on preventative versus reactive methods of caring for children experiencing risk factors. This model also includes multiple strategies to increase compensation, both directly and indirectly.<sup>5</sup> As early childhood educators are professionally prepared, their compensation reflects their experience and expertise. Compensation is similar to those with comparable qualifications, experience, and job responsibilities, regardless of whether they work in a community-based center, elementary school, or family child care home. Illinois has an opportunity to adopt this model as it currently is reviewing various governance models through the formation of the Illinois Commission on Equitable Early Childhood Education and Care Funding.

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<sup>2</sup> Sarver, S.L., Huddleston-Casas, C., Charlet, C., & Wessels, R. (2020). *Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce: Report and Recommendations of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission*. Omaha, NE: Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska

<sup>3</sup> Barnett, S. & Kasmin, R (2017). Teacher Compensation Parity Policies and State-Funded Pre-k Programs. New Brunswick, NJ: The National Institute for Early Education Research & Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>4</sup> Board on Children, Youth, & Families. (2015). Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation. *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, & Medicine*.

<sup>5</sup> Urban Institute: Center on Labor, Human Service, and Population. (2018). *Early Childhood Educator Compensation in the Washington Region*

In the meantime, one local example from Illinois Action for Children is instructive of potential impact. Via partnerships with other community-based organizations and a local university, a cohort was established comprised of teachers interested in achieving licensure within one year. Participating staff will be able to utilize organizational professional development benefit stipends to lower the overall cost. One of the goals with this cohort is to increase compensation for staff when they complete the program. The Illinois State Board of Education can adopt and fund these types of strategies to scale and assist those in the workforce who do not have the resources to pay for or work for an organization that provides professional development benefits. To uphold this investment in compensation, educational programs that prepare the workforce must commit to providing seamless pathways so that individuals may advance in their careers.

## **OUTCOME**

Lack of compensation parity has contributed to a teacher shortage crisis. A sustainable public investment, supported by a centralized early care and education system that is integrated and streamlined, will help to mitigate the negative impact of the complex patchwork of public and private funding streams at the federal, state, and local levels. Increasing compensation will increase the quality of early care and education, resulting in a diverse, competent, and professionally supported workforce that is stable enough to build the relationships that support positive early learning experiences. With these solutions in place and with the appropriate support, the outcome for children, teachers, and administrators is the creation of an environment where young children thrive when they have secure positive relationships with adults who are knowledgeable about how to support their development and learning.

At a time when we are all looking for silver linings amid a global pandemic, we should leverage the moment as a wake-up call that teachers and child care professionals are the backbone of our economy. As such, adequate compensation is paramount.



## PROBLEM

Without high-quality, affordable child care options, children, families, and employers suffer. The supply of one of the key types of child care – home-based child care providers<sup>1</sup> – is in serious jeopardy. Home-based child care (HBCC) is one of first types of early childhood settings that families utilize the most. Today, there are 7 million children under the age of five in home-based child care versus the 3.8 million in center-based care.<sup>2</sup> HBCC fills a significant gap in the child care pipeline for families and employers. The availability of affordable, high-quality child care builds a strong foundation for the children in the program and for the community it serves. The lack of child care affects working families and the employer's bottom line.

Child care breakdowns are a leading cause of employee absences, which costs businesses \$4.4 billion annually in the United States.<sup>3</sup> The rising cost of child care is a heavy burden on household income for employees. In Illinois, child care makes up, on average, 14 percent of median married couples' income and is a staggering 51 percent of median income of a single-parent family in the state.<sup>4</sup> Factors such as the lack of affordable care, the need for flexible schedules to accommodate part-time and non-traditional work hours, and parental choice has led many families to choose home-based child care as their preferred option of child care over the more traditional option of a child care center. However, in Illinois, there continues to be a steady decline in home-based child care<sup>5</sup> that will be exacerbated by COVID -19 closures. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) surveyed 6,000 providers with over 53 percent being home-based child care; 30 percent of the respondents stated

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<sup>1</sup> Home Based Child care Providers defined by NSECE as provider who provide child care in their homes either in a regulated fashion as part of the family, friends and neighbor network

<sup>2</sup> National Survey of Early Care & Education Project Team –Characteristics of Home-Based Early Care & Education Providers

<sup>3</sup> Child Care Aware

<sup>4</sup> Child Care Aware

<sup>5</sup> Child care Supply Statewide Child Chare Data Base - HBCC providers that accept Child care Assistance Programs (CCAP) has been on a steady decline since 2014, reduced by 22 percent from 2014 to 2018. HBCC providers that accept Child care Assistance Programs (CCAP) has been on a steady decline since 2014, reduced by 22 percent from 2014 to 2018.

they could not survive a closure of more than two weeks.<sup>6</sup>

## CAUSE

Several factors have contributed to the decline of HBCC providers in Illinois. Particularly, the increased demands placed on HBCC to raise quality. The 2014 re-authorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) included new regulations to enhance children's health and safety and improve child care quality.

While increases in quality are positive steps for children and families in these child care situations, it is problematic for the providers. Many HBCC providers help their family members who have limited child care options. Providers who work in this manner do not view this as a long-term arrangement and do not see the benefits of investing their time and energy to meet enhanced regulations.

Many home-based child care providers<sup>7</sup> with a long-term plan find it challenging to meet the increased requirements due to lack of resources and time. HBCC providers serve families 11-plus hours a day, five-plus days a week. This leaves little time to attend required trainings and complete necessary paperwork to comply with increased standards. It makes balancing and operating a home-based child care program and other family obligations a continuous challenge.

Many HBCC providers enter the field because of their love of children. However, they may not have the business acumen needed to develop a sustainable business model, making tradeoffs between affordability for the families, quality of care, insurance coverage for themselves, and a living wage for their own families. These providers must pay for rent, utilities, meals and snacks, leaving the available budget for paying employees and other expenses insufficient with their current net income; employees tend to make minimum wage or less.

Isolation is another factor that is affecting the HBCC providers. Providers work long hours, often as the sole adult in the home. This reality leaves little time for socializing and networking with other adults and peers. They feel alone when dealing with numerous issues that arise when caring for children and micro-entrepreneurs. This isolation can lead to many leaving the field for other types of employment, leaving a void for families and a community.

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<sup>6</sup> Study conducted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children March 2020

<sup>7</sup> Family Child care Homes are defined as child care settings offered in the home environment that are regulated

**SOLUTION**

By building a network to support HBCC providers, we will sustain this vital form of care and ensure adequate supply. In 2016, the Office of Child Care, an office in the Administration for Children and Families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, singled out networks as a quality improvement strategy for helping HBCC providers comply with the 2014 federal CCDBG standards.<sup>8</sup> Building HBCC networks through the existing Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) system in Illinois leverages the strengths of the current systems. They are a trusted resource to aid with ExceleRate, Child Care Assistance Programs, Health & Safety Monitoring and required trainings. These networks provide an ongoing support system; assist in the development of peer leaders; and address the sustainability issue. The Conceptual Model for Quality in Home Based Care, developed by experts in the field, has been used as a reference in helping design a support system.

**The Conceptual Model for Quality in Home Based Care**  
(Adapted from Blasberg et al., 2019)

Foundations for Sustainability of Care	Lasting Relationships	Opportunities for Learning & Development
Creating and maintaining a safe environment	Developing nurturing relationships with children	Promoting children’s wellbeing
Promoting providers’ self-health and wellness	Facilitating children’s relationships with each other	Capitalizing on available materials, equipment, and other resources
Identifying and engaging with community resources, including other care givers	Building responsive relationships with families	Supporting each child’s development through stimulating, responsive activities, including routines
Accessing supports for caregiving and teaching	Maintaining healthy relationships with other adults/family members in the home	Building on children’s everyday familiar and culturally relevant experiences to promote learning
Managing business and finances	Fostering relationships in the community	Supporting children to learn with and from each other
Demonstrating reflection and openness to change		

<sup>8</sup> Mapping the Family Child Care Network Landscape, 2019

Research shows a network model reduces many of the challenges providers face: administrative burden of Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) requirements, lack of guidance when working to increase quality, being isolated, and lack of business acumen. Below is one potential model design that could easily be implemented through the state Child Care Resources and Referral system.

### Foundations for Sustainability of Care

An important component of the model incorporates training that strengthens the business acumen of HBCC providers. These trainings break down pieces necessary for a thriving small business into bite-size pieces and in the language that is best suited for the provider. The curriculum helps providers think through a business model built on their unique value proposition and maps out the true cost of care to determine how the model supports a sustainable income for HBCC providers, while still offering quality care.

Shared services<sup>9</sup> offered through the model reduce the administrative burden that providers face with CCAP through a system that leverages best practices, coordinates tracking, billing and trouble shoots issues with CCAP billing. Networks housed within the CCRR system have the ability to reduce back and forth communication on the status of CCAP billing and leverage best practices throughout network members. The network strengthens the providers' ability to negotiate discounts for supplies and services using their joint purchasing power. YWCA Metropolitan Chicago has a model that leverages several of these components called Myrtle's Club, which has saved providers several thousand dollars a year on supplies and services. Providers use these savings to invest in their family's economic vitality and quality enhancements.

### Lasting Relationship

Structuring cohorts of providers by geographic areas allows the network to compile a list of community resources that are utilized by all network members. This drastically decreases the time each provider needs to identify and cultivate relationships. These resources can help providers with early intervention referrals, services for families, field trip ideas, local learning opportunities, resources for required and enhanced trainings, and local enrollment building and marketing channels; thus, building responsive relationships with families.

The cohort model identifies local providers that assume the role of peer leaders. These peer leaders share lessons learned, provide support for network

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<sup>9</sup> Opportunity Exchange- Reinvent vs. Rebuild: Let's Fix the Child Care System, Louise Stoney April 2020

members, and help the network host develop programs and services that resonate and prove beneficial for providers.

The cohort helps providers balance their work and ensure that there are healthy relationships with the other adults residing in the provider's home. This is an often-ignored complexity when discussing supports needed for HBCC providers. If not addressed, this has the potential to add stress that affects the care provided in the home.

### Opportunities for Learning and Development

The network model funds trained early childhood personnel to conduct home visits and mentor HBCC providers. These visits are an opportunity to provide hands-on training in a variety of topics including: how to support each child's development through stimulating, responsive activities and routine; children's mental health; and health and safety practices. Home visitors assess the level of care, unique strengths and opportunity areas of the provider, thus making the coaching they receive customized to their unique situation. These interactions build strong relationships between provider and mentor with a foundation in trust. A confident, educated and well-equipped HBCC provider is able to promote a child's well-being and support their development with stimulating, responsive activities and routines.

### OUTCOME

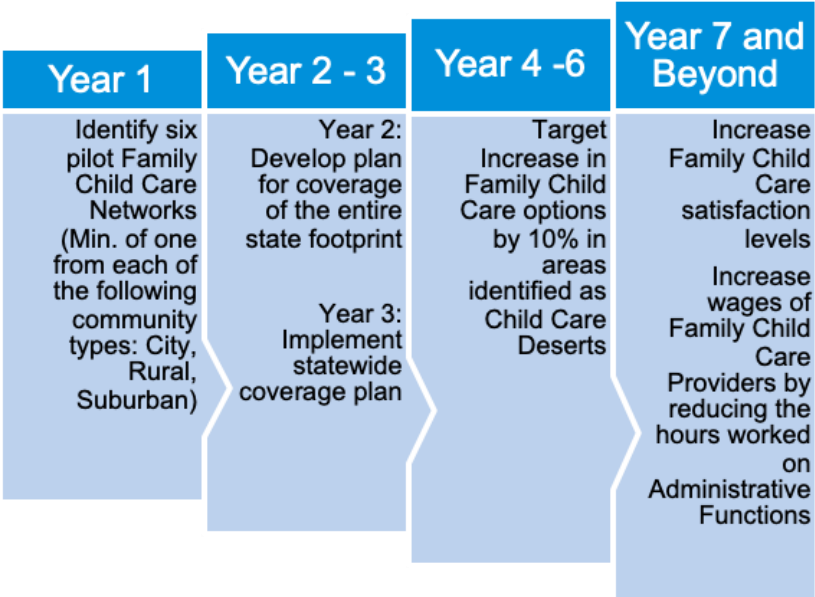
HBCC providers fill gaps in our current child care system. By developing a support network, we ensure the following benefits are maintained:

- HBCC providers help address the issue of Child Care Deserts that plagues 58 percent of Illinois residents.<sup>10</sup>
- HBCC accommodates for parents with non-traditional work schedules.
- HBCC ensures that providers are representatives of the children in their care from a racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic standpoint.
- HBCC is a more attractive option for Essential Workers during the recent pandemic due to a lower concentration of children in group settings.

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<sup>10</sup> The definition of Child Care Deserts are areas that have three children under the age of five for every available child care slots.

In addition to these benefits, using an existing system ensures that the cost is minimal to have maximum impact. The timeline below outlines key implementation milestones and outcomes used to evaluate the impact of the proposed policy.



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# Workforce Pipeline Development

John Christopher Borrero

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Collaboration for Early Childhood

## PROBLEM

### Black men are absent from the early childhood workforce.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2019 that only three percent of preschool and kindergarten teachers were men. Fewer were men of color.<sup>1</sup> During a critical developmental period where children are engaged in significant brain development, social and emotional growth and concepts related to self-worth and self-concept, male engagement is important.<sup>2</sup>

### Why does it matter?

Many research studies have shown strong benefits of male mentorship and role modeling, and the potential benefits of initiatives that create pathways for men to become roles models in the lives of young boys. One literature review showed that over 80 percent of the studies conducted on male involvement and young children have shown positive impact that men can have on young children.<sup>3</sup> An analysis of over 100 studies on parent-child relationships found a father's presence to be at least as impactful as a mother's.<sup>4</sup> A study in child psychiatry showed that a male's more active play style and comparatively slower response to a toddler or infant experiencing frustration serve to promote problem-solving competencies and independence in children.<sup>5</sup> Another study found that children who feel a closeness and warmth with a father figure are

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<sup>1</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor. 2019. "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey." <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Solomon, J. 2016. "Gender Identity and Expression in the Early Childhood Classroom." *Young Children* 71 (3): 61–72.

<sup>3</sup> Paul R. Amato and Fernando Rivera, "Paternal Involvement and Children's Behavior Problems," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 61 (1999): 375-384.

<sup>4</sup> Ronald P. Rohner and A. Veneziano, "The Importance of Father Love: History and Contemporary Evidence," *Review of General Psychology* 5.4 (2001): 382-405.

<sup>5</sup> Kyle D. Pruett, *Fatherhood: Why Father Care is as Essential as Mother Care for Your Child*, (New York: The Free Press, 2000), p. 41-42.

twice as likely to enter college, 75 percent less likely to have a child in their teen years, 80 percent less likely to be incarcerated and half as likely to show various signs of depression.<sup>6</sup> In a 26-year-long study, researchers found that the number one factor in developing empathy in children was father involvement. When fathers and positive male role models spend regular time with children, those children become more compassionate adults.<sup>7</sup>

The research is compelling. Young children benefit from time with men. When young children fail to form relationships with men, they learn implicit lessons around the role of males and whether or not men can be a productive and nurturing presence. And in the case of young boys, the lessons that they are learning are about themselves and their future potential.<sup>8</sup>

### A problem for boys in particular.

In addition to the impact that men potentially have in the lives of young children, there is significant research that speaks to the particular issues faced by young boys. Each year, in the United States, nearly 17,000 children under five years of age are suspended or expelled from their early care and education programs.<sup>9</sup> Nationally, suspensions occur for children under 5 years of age at three times the rate of children in grades K-12.<sup>10</sup> Suspension is when a child is sent home for part of a day or up to 20 days, in response to problem behavior. Permanent removal in response to behavior is an expulsion.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the data show that Black children are 2.2 times more likely to be suspended or expelled than other children, and while boys represent 51 percent of the preschool population, they receive 82 percent of the suspensions and expulsions.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Frank Furstenberg and Kathleen Harris, "When and Why Fathers Matter: Impacts of Father Involvement on Children of Adolescent Mothers," in *Young Unwed Fathers: Changing Roles and Emerging Policies*, R. Lerman and T. Ooms, eds. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Koestner, et al., "The Family Origins of Empathic Concern: A Twenty-Six Year Longitudinal Study," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 58 (1990): 709-717.

<sup>8</sup> Aina, O.E., & A.C. Petronella. 2011. "Why Does Gender Matter? Counteracting Stereotypes with Young Children." *Dimensions of Early Childhood* 39 (3): 11-19

<sup>9</sup> US Departments of Health and Human Services and Education (2014). Joint policy statement on expulsion and suspension policies in early childhood settings. Washington, DC. Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/policy-statement-ece-expulsionssuspensions.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Gilliam, W. S. (2005). *Prekindergarteners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems*. New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development

<sup>11</sup> *Suspension and Expulsion in Early Childhood*, Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (2016). FPG Child Development Institute of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). 2018 NSCH methodology report. Retrieved from <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/nsch/technical-documentation/methodology/2018-NSCH-Methodology-Report.pdf>.



In Illinois, preschool suspension and expulsion rates are not captured. Although legislation was passed in 2017 to curb preschool expulsion and suspension, a 2019 study conducted by the University of Illinois at Chicago shows that a third of preschool programs in Illinois have inaccurate information about the law. Twenty percent of studied programs did not even realize that the law existed.<sup>13</sup> This lack of knowledge continues to support suspension and expulsion as viable disciplinary interventions even when there is clear evidence that these practices can be associated with expulsion or suspension later in life.<sup>14</sup> Even more alarming is the data and evidence that show that young students who are expelled or suspended are 10 times more likely to drop out of school, experience issues with academic achievement, hold negative school attitudes, and even encounter incarceration later in life than those children who are never expelled or suspended.<sup>15 16 17</sup>

A growing body of research has sought to explore the extent to which implicit biases play a role in identifying children with challenging behaviors. These studies have found that many preschool teachers carry personal perceptions or biases into the classroom with them about children and their behaviors, which are based on gender and race. This teacher bias appears to be largely associated with the child's race, and leads to the discrimination of boys, especially boys who are Black.<sup>18</sup>

### Race and gender together have a role.

A difference in race seems to predispose teachers to identify a child for disciplinary action. But, a difference in race and gender seem to make the likelihood that a child is disciplined many times more likely. The concept of race and gender coming together to increase a child's likelihood of disciplinary action is well researched. A 2016 research project by the U.S. Department of Education found that Black boys in particular were disproportionately suspended or

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<sup>13</sup> Zinsser, K.M., Silver, H.C., Hussaini, Q., & Zulauf, C.A. (2019). Evaluation Report of the Implementation of Illinois Public Act 100-0105: Early childhood programs' knowledge of and responses to the 2018 expulsion legislation. The University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL.

<sup>14</sup> Raffaele Mendez, L. (2003). Predictors of suspension and negative school outcomes: A longitudinal investigation. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 99, 17-33.

<sup>15</sup> Lamont, J. H., Devore, C. D., Allison, M., Ancona, R., Barnett, S. E., Gunther, R., Young, T. (2013). Out-of-school suspension and expulsion. *Pediatrics*, 131(3), e1000-e1007.

<sup>16</sup> Petras, H., Masyn, K. E., Buckley, J. A., Jalongo, N. S., & Kellam, S. (2011). Who is most at risk for school removal? A multilevel discrete time survival analysis of individual- and context-level influences. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 103, 223

<sup>17</sup> American Psychological Association, Zero Tolerance Task Force Report (2008). An evidentiary review and recommendations

<sup>18</sup> Gilliam, 2005; Dobbs, M. (May 2005). Youngest students most likely to be expelled. *Washington Post*, May 17, 2005. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/16/AR2005051601201.html>

expelled from preschool. In their research, they found that Black preschoolers were 3.6 times more likely to be suspended as white preschoolers. Further supporting the concept of disproportionality, this study found that young Black boys being suspended and expelled at much higher rates than other children. Remarkably, 48 percent of preschool children suspended are Black, although Black students represent only 18 percent of the preschool student population. As early as preschool, Black students are 3.6 times more likely to be suspended or expelled as white students. Although 54 percent of preschool children nationally are boys, they account for 79 percent of children who are suspended or expelled from school. Overall findings show that Black and Latino boys are more frequently suspended and expelled from early childhood programs than all other children.<sup>19</sup>

A study from the Edward Zigler Center at Yale University recruited early childhood educators to be observed in a simulated classroom setting, where they were asked to watch video clips of preschool children engaged in typical tabletop activities. They were told to report potentially challenging behavior using a keypad. In addition to the keypad entries, an eye tracking device was used to log the time teachers spent watching the behavior of individual children. The research team found that teachers spent more time looking at Black boys than girls and white children. Teachers spent the most time watching the Black boy in the videos, although the children were actors who weren't engaged in challenging behavior at all. When teachers were asked which of the children required most of their attention, 42% indicated the Black boy. Furthermore, teachers, when interviewed, appeared to expect challenging behaviors more from Black children and specifically Black boys.<sup>20</sup>

In countless studies, teachers held Black boys to lower behavioral expectations and disproportionately identified Black boys for disciplinary action. This cycle of having Black boys removed from a school environment hinders his development, limits his access to the nurturing experiences that are necessary for healthy development, and delays his process of identifying issues that he might be experiencing related to his disability status or mental health.

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<sup>19</sup> Gilliam, 2005; Dobbs, M. (May 2005). Youngest students most likely to be expelled. Washington Post, May 17, 2005. Retrieved from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/16/AR2005051601201.html>

<sup>20</sup> Gilliam, W. S., Maupin, A. N., Reyes, C. R., Accavitti, M., & Shic, F. (2016). Do early educators' implicit biases regarding sex and race relate to behavior expectations and recommendations of preschool expulsions and suspensions? New Haven, CT: Yale University, Child Study Center.

This dynamic is the material from which the Preschool to Prison Pipeline<sup>21</sup> is constructed.

## CAUSE

Several factors make it difficult for men to find careers in early childhood.

### Earning potential.

The underrepresentation of men in early childhood is widely attributed to the low earning potential of preschool teachers. Low salaries associated with teaching in early childhood education is a primary reason that male teachers choose other professions. In addition to the lack of respect and acknowledgement that preschool teachers receive, as demonstrated by low salaries, societies' perception of men is that they are expected to be the primary breadwinners in their families and have a higher obligation to earn a healthy wage.

### Difficulty fitting in.

Society has feminized the profession and projects that is strictly women's work. Because of the lack of men in the field, some parents and programs may be resistant to the idea of male early childhood workers. Furthermore, common stereotypes of men in these spaces have an undergirding of perceiving men as dangerous or a threat to children. All of these socially constructed attitudes can contribute to a challenging or hostile work environment for men.

### The over-incarceration of Black men.

The above factors impact all men. Furthermore, people with criminal record histories have historically been restricted from working with children. Teaching is not an option for a man with a criminal record, and the over-incarceration of Black men has meant that Black men have also fit into this category of ineligible potential teachers and role models.

Walter Gilliam, the principal researcher on preschool expulsion at Yale University, presents us with a framework for looking at the parallels in experience between Black men and Black boys. "Implicit biases do not begin with Black men and police," Gilliam said. "They begin with young Black boys and their preschool teachers, if not earlier."<sup>22</sup> There are, in fact, many parallels to be found in the experiences of young boys and incarcerated men.

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<sup>21</sup> ACLU. "School-to-Prison Pipeline." American Civil Liberties Union, 2020, [www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline](http://www.aclu.org/issues/juvenile-justice/school-prison-pipeline).

<sup>22</sup> Illinois Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act, H.R. 1438, 116th Cong. (2019)

Furthermore, these factors begin earlier in life and often sparked by exclusionary disciplinary policies in, specifically zero tolerance policies, that remove students from the school environment increase the probability of a youth coming into contact with the justice system. Zero-tolerance policies have led to the mistreatment of students' situations and strict disciplinary action which greatly impact the students' future, fast tracking them to juvenile detention centers or prison. Similarly, an aggressive war on drugs in Illinois disproportionately affected men of color, removing them from their communities and exposing them to consequences that impact the rest of their lives.

A 2014 U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights brief found that although Black students engaged in similar behavior as white students, Black students were suspended and expelled for disruption at a rate three times greater than white students. This study also showed that white students were given less severe consequences for comparable behavior.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Black and Latino Illinoisans made up 71 percent of the prison population in 2013, despite comprising only 31 percent of the general population.

## SOLUTION

### Facilitating the pathway for Black men to become leaders in the lives of young Black children.

In order to succeed, Black boys must have access to the network of relationships and resources that accompany enrollment in a high quality early education program.<sup>24</sup> Because race and gender are factors in a young boy's exposure to adverse school experiences, they become crucial parts of the solution and approach. If implicit biases begin in preschool, having access to teachers of their same race and gender might be one way to curb this particular incidence of biased behavior.

### A unique time in Illinois history.

One pathway to explore an untapped source of future workers has origins in the recent passage of groundbreaking legislation that expunges the criminal records of up to 700,000 men who had been incarcerated for low-level cannabis

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<sup>23</sup> Brown, Emma. "Yale Study Suggests Racial Bias among Preschool Teachers." The Washington Post, WP Company, 27 Sept. 2016. [www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/09/27/yale-study-suggests-racial-bias-among-preschool-teachers/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2016/09/27/yale-study-suggests-racial-bias-among-preschool-teachers/).

<sup>24</sup> Van Egeren, L.A., Kirk, R., Brophy-Herb, H.E., Carlson, J. S., Tableman, B. & Bender, S. (2011). An Interdisciplinary Evaluation Report of Michigan's Child care Expulsion Prevention (CCEP) Initiative. Michigan State University.

offenses. Illinois lawmakers undertook this effort to repair some of the damage caused by law enforcement's efforts to combat sale and use of the drug, particularly in communities of color.<sup>25</sup>

Law enforcement agencies have a five-year period to expunge records of minor marijuana arrests that did not result in a conviction, starting with the most recent cases. An estimated 572,000 arrest records fall into that category.

Built into the Illinois Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act is a program called the Restore, Reinvest and Renew Program, or R3 Program, which directs 25 percent of cannabis tax revenue to fund strategies that focus on violence prevention, re-entry and health services to areas across the state that our objectively found to be acutely suffering from the horrors of violence, bolstered by concentrated disinvestment.<sup>26</sup> The Illinois Department of Revenue projects the State will collect \$57 million in FY2020 from cannabis taxes and licensing fees and \$140.5 million from taxes alone in FY2021, which starts July 1, 2020. 25 percent of this revenue will support the Criminal Justice Information Projects Fund for the Restore, Reinvest, and Renew Program to provide grants and assistance to communities harmed by discriminatory drug laws.

With some expungements taking as many as five years to go into effect, there is time for a gradual approach and response, and a multi-year plan that sees men find their ways back into careers and communities. Early childhood careers can now be a promising option for newly released men.

### Building the Prison to Preschool Pipeline.

The State of Illinois can use R3 funding to provide incentives for City Colleges of Chicago to pilot accelerated programs for men to meet Illinois State preschool licensure requirements in the timeframe in which their criminal records are being expunged. This will allow them to pursue careers in Early Childhood that were previously unavailable to them.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are 523,000 preschool teacher jobs in the state of Illinois, with an anticipated growth rate of 7% by 2028.<sup>27</sup> There will be a need for more teachers especially as plans are underway leading to universal access to preschool.

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<sup>25</sup> The War on Marijuana in Black and White, American Civil Liberties Union Report, 2013

<sup>26</sup> Illinois Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act, H.R. 1438, 116th Cong. (2019).

<sup>27</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Preschool Teachers, on the Internet at <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/preschool-teachers.htm>

A partnership with higher education institutions and the Restore, Reinvest and Renew Program can facilitate Black men entering the field of early childhood through:

- A course of study that helps newly released men achieve a B.A. or an M.A. in less than five years.
- Financial support to help candidates receive tuition coverage.
- Supportive assistance for newly released men to help them to reintegrate into society, schooling and work.
- Support for preschool directors in recruitment and retention of men from this program.
- Guidance and mentoring support in completing state licensure requirements for preschool educators.

## OUTCOME

### Revisiting earning potential.

Historically, people released from incarceration have struggled with lower earning potential and difficulty securing employment. This is a chronic issue that supportive agencies face when trying to help this population to reintegrate into society. Although the salaries in early childhood are lower, they are competitive for men beginning their careers or who have lower earning potential because of their histories with justice involvement.

### Turning the page on the over-incarceration of Black men.

Illinois has already taken the important step of enacting legislation that should contribute to disrupting the over-incarceration of Black men. A comprehensive plan for reintegration could provide promising careers for these important men and also help all of our youngest Illinoisans to experience hope in their introduction to schooling. In both worlds, the solution starts with school.

With an average total cost of \$10,000 for a newly released man to pursue an associate's degree at one of Chicago's City Colleges, or an annual \$15,000 investment to pursue a bachelor's degree, a \$15 million investment would offer 1,000 men a chance to pursue a career that could change their lives as well as the lives of the Black boys in classrooms across the State. It would be a bold, pioneering move which would form a reverse pipeline and framework: Prison to Preschool Pipeline.

### PROBLEM

Representation matters in teaching and leadership. Illinois lacks a deep pool of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse public-school administrators with strong early childhood backgrounds. Budget allocations and policy improvements can measure Illinois' commitment to early childhood education (ECE). Governor J.B. Pritzker strengthened this commitment when proclaiming an audacious goal, that "Illinois will become the best state in the nation for families raising young children, with the nation's best early childhood education and child care."<sup>1</sup> As Illinois increases its commitment and investment in early childhood education and care, it has the opportunity to simultaneously strengthen and diversify the pipeline of school administrators with early childhood and principal endorsements from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

Aisha Ray, Ph.D., speaks to the need to diversify the leadership workforce while creating equitable early childhood systems, "I believe that equity, justice, and early childhood systems change requires that leaders reflect the complex social diversities present in the children, families, communities, and workforce served in all early childhood systems and settings."<sup>2</sup> A guiding principle of *Transforming the Illinois Early Childhood Workforce*, a recent report issued by the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, affirms the importance of the workforce reflecting the children and families served in addition to shared, common-core competencies.<sup>3</sup> Diversity in the sociocultural composition of administrators benefits students, teachers, families, and the community.

### CAUSE

Growth in preschool funding has increased the number of young children in schools. However, Illinois has historically lacked administrators with an early childhood background. Historical and systemic barriers (e.g., access, privilege,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/Pages/news-item.aspx?ReleaseID=20950>

<sup>2</sup> Ray, Aisha. Leadership Matters But Socially Diverse Leadership May Matter Most Of All. Retrieved from: <https://www.buildinitiative.org/blog/leadership-matters-but-socially-diverse-leadership-may-matter-most-of-all>

<sup>3</sup> Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce: A Call to Action for the State of Illinois. Retrieved from: [https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Documents/Transforming%20the%20Early%20Childhood%20Workforce%20IL%20Report.pdf?mc\\_cid=0710c54cab&mc\\_eid=d4f13487ce](https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/Documents/Transforming%20the%20Early%20Childhood%20Workforce%20IL%20Report.pdf?mc_cid=0710c54cab&mc_eid=d4f13487ce)

internalized oppression, lack of mentors) have contributed to low numbers of Black and Latinx administrators nationally and in Illinois. Specifically, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision had the unintended consequence of the removal of Black teachers and principals who staffed Black-only schools. Madeline Will affirmed, "After the decision, tens of thousands of Black teachers and principals lost their jobs as white superintendents began to integrate schools but balked at putting Black educators in positions of authority over white teachers or students."<sup>4</sup> The principalship has not recovered from that dismantling.

Lack of diversity perpetuates a deficit cycle. Dr. Ray uses the term "internalized oppression" when discussing the messages early childhood educators receive during their "life course."<sup>5</sup> Ray asserts that during their life course, many ECE teachers do not generally see people with their cultural backgrounds at the leadership/policy table. That reality can become an internalized message that they should not become leaders.

Early childhood was the forgotten age group in administrator preparation programs. Although the Illinois Principal Endorsement now includes some content related to preschool, the interpretation of the requirement is broad, and higher education programs have taken varied approaches to integrate content related to early learning. Additionally, the lack of faculty with early childhood experience continues to be a challenge in higher education in Illinois.<sup>6</sup> There remains a need for elementary administrators with a solid understanding of and experience with young learners.

## **SOLUTION**

The time is now to support, strengthen, and grow a diverse pipeline of school leaders and administrators with a robust early childhood background. An Illinois Administrator Academy for Early Childhood Educators (IAAECE) will recruit and prepare Black and Latinx school administrators with strong early childhood backgrounds.

Cohorts of educators holding an Illinois Professional Educator license and an early childhood endorsement will be supported to obtain the Principal

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<sup>4</sup> Will, Madeline 65 Years After 'Brown v. Board,' Where Are All the Black Educators? (2019) Retrieved from: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/05/14/65-years-after-brown-v-board-where.html>

<sup>5</sup> Why Are All the White People at the Policy Table? Developing Racially/Ethnically Diverse Leadership in Early Childhood Systems QRIS 2018 Plenary

<sup>6</sup> Lieberman, A. (2019) Preparing Principals for Pre-K in Illinois: The Prairie State's Story of Reform and Implementation. Retrieved from: <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/preparing-principals-pre-k-illinois/>



Endorsement and take on administrative roles. Current successful leadership models, (e.g., New Leaders Aspiring Principals program) can be adapted to increase the workforce equity of ECE school administrators.<sup>7</sup> The New Leaders approach of "...intensive study, a mentored residency, and induction support once participants take the helm of their own school" can be modified for this academy.

This focused administrator academy would achieve the following items:

- Increase awareness of a statewide career pathway while illustrating how teachers of young children can actively pursue leadership roles through education, experience, and competencies. The academy will remove barriers to access for underrepresented groups seeking an ISBE Principal Endorsement.
- Pilot a higher education program to support cohorts of Black- and Latinx-aspiring ECE leaders seeking the ISBE Principal Endorsement and a master's degree in education.
  - Incorporate rigorous, meaningful ECE content into curriculum.
  - Focus on the five competencies identified by the New Venture Fund: content and pedagogy, operational and management, team and interpersonal, individual, and policy and community.<sup>8</sup>
  - Utilize a cohort model structured as a professional learning community. Supports include an assigned mentor/coach, a year-long, job-embedded residency, and induction support.
  - Utilize a mixed-delivery system to reduce barriers to face-to-face education.
- Register 100 aspiring leaders (five cohorts) with a focused recruitment effort to help alleviate under-representation.
- Ensure scholarships are available to cover tuition and fees. An administrator scholarship modeled after the Minority Teachers of

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<sup>7</sup> <https://newleaders.org/programs/aspiring-principals/>

<sup>8</sup> Developing Early Childhood Leaders to Support Strong, Equitable Systems: A review of the early childhood education leadership development landscape. New Venture Fund. 2018

Illinois (MTI) scholarship, which includes a commitment to work in Illinois,<sup>9</sup> is in place.

- Devise financial incentives for school districts or employers to support academy completion (e.g., substitute fees for educator release time).

## OUTCOME

Illinois can take the lead in diversifying the ECE leadership workforce. Increasing school leadership diversity supports the following outcomes:

- A pipeline of administrators that is reflective of the communities served.
- A workforce prepared for leadership roles with strong early childhood backgrounds.
- Diversity of thought in local, state, and national early childhood system development.
- Strengthen the pre-K through third-grade continuum.
- More Black and Latinx leaders to mentor and support the recruitment and retention of diverse teachers.<sup>10</sup>
- A pool of administrators with early childhood endorsements to serve as higher education faculty.
- Administrators with a common set of ECE competencies promoting best practices.

Effective administrators serving early childhood children and families require leadership competencies and a deep understanding of the complexities of early care and education. Historic barriers require intentional practices to recruit diverse educators into the leadership pipeline.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.isac.org/students/during-college/types-of-financial-aid/scholarships/minority-teachers-of-illinois-mti-scholarship-program.html>

<sup>10</sup> School leadership: An untapped opportunity to draw young people of color into teaching. (2018) Retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2018/11/26/school-leadership-an-untapped-opportunity-to-draw-young-people-of-color-into-teaching/>

## PROBLEM

The Illinois Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce, specifically licensed lead teachers, need to be representative of the diverse group of children being served in classrooms across the state.

According to the 2016 American Community Survey, in the city of Chicago, just 11 percent of teachers are Latinx and 15 percent of teachers are Black. Racial and cultural diversity is underrepresented in teaching positions that require higher qualifications. Ninety percent of all Illinois Preschool for All teachers—the position that requires the Professional Educator License (PEL)—are white. But nearly 40 percent of teachers in licensed childcare centers—where qualification requirements are the lowest—are teachers of color.<sup>1</sup> Nearly half of all teacher assistants in both school-based and licensed child care centers are Black or Latinx.<sup>2</sup>

The pipeline to a teaching career starts well before college graduation—it starts with getting more Black and Latinx young people through high school and college.<sup>3</sup> According to the *Illinois Early Childhood Workforce 2017 Report*, nearly a third of the teaching staff in licensed child care centers who report that their highest degree is a high school diploma or a GED also report that they have taken some college-level courses. Within this group, more than 42 percent have 60 credits or more—the equivalent of an associate degree. Yet, these individuals have not yet earned degrees.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, more than 3,000 teachers in Illinois hold bachelor's degrees and Illinois Gateways Level 5 ECE Credentials but have not earned Illinois Professional Educator Licenses with endorsements in early childhood education.<sup>5</sup>

Diversity matters within the ECE workforce. While all early childhood educators should be equipped with cultural competencies, educators who share a

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<sup>1</sup> Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) for Governor's Cabinet on Children and Youth Project on Early Childhood Workforce Development

<sup>2</sup> Whitehead, J. (2018). *Illinois' early childhood workforce 2017 report*. Bloomington, IL: INCCRRA.

<sup>3</sup> (Lindsay, Blom & Tilsley, 2017). *Diversifying the Classroom: Examining the Teacher Pipeline*, Urban Institute, October 5, 2017

<sup>4</sup> Whitehead, J. (2018). *Illinois' early childhood workforce 2017 report*. Bloomington, IL: INCCRRA.

<sup>5</sup> Gershenson, S., Hart, C., Hyman, J., Lindsay, C., & Papageorge, N. W. (2018). The long-run impacts of same-race teachers (No. w25254). National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w25254>.

sociocultural background with the children and families they serve may provide additional benefits. For workforce diversity to be obtained, there need to be clear pathways and job-embedded supports in place.

## CAUSE

Many of those that make up the ECE workforce face several barriers to earning degrees, such as being first-generation college students who live at or below the poverty line or being non-native English speakers who may struggle with the academic demands of classes conducted in English—even if they are well educated in their native tongue.<sup>6</sup> Some early childhood educators lack the social and cultural capital to navigate the post-secondary educational system and to seek out the supports they need to increase their knowledge and advance their careers.<sup>7</sup> However, they do possess social and cultural competencies that enable them to provide high-quality early childhood programming for children and their families.<sup>8</sup> It is time to ensure that teachers do not have to navigate these complex systems on their own.

Structured partnerships between institutions of higher education (two- and four-year programs), and early childhood programs to provide job-embedded coaching programs can provide teachers with the support needed to successfully complete a degree. These innovative coaching models allow current teachers and teacher assistants opportunities for promotions and the credentials needed to take on leadership roles in the field of ECE. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), coaching is a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized early-learning and adult-learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the recipient(s).<sup>9</sup> Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group. Coaching differs from mentoring or supervision as it is focused on the ongoing process of goal setting, skill-building, feedback, and improvement.<sup>10</sup> Models of coaching that also

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<sup>6</sup> Ross-Gordon, J.M. (2011). Research on adult learners: Supporting the needs of a student population that is no longer nontraditional. *Peer Review*, 13(1), 26-29.

<sup>7</sup> Kagan, S.L., Kauerz, K. & Tarrant, K. (2008). *The early care and education teaching workforce at the fulcrum: An agenda for reform*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

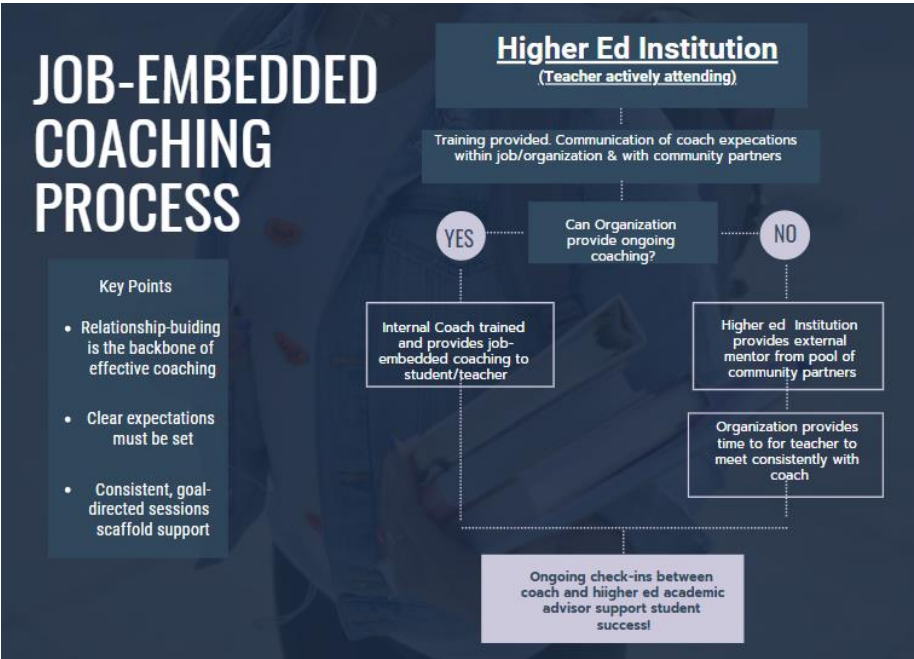
<sup>8</sup> Main, C. & Yarbrough, K. (2018) *Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce: A Call to Action for Illinois*

<sup>9</sup> National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), “Early Childhood Education Professional Development: Training and Technical Assistance Glossary,” 2011.

<sup>10</sup> O’Keefe, B. *Primetime for Coaching: Improving Instructional Coaching in Early Childhood Education*. Bellwether Education Partners, 2017

include an equity lens provide valuable tools to the diverse workforce of early childhood professionals that will be utilizing these supports.

One model for the innovative collaboration necessary for job-embedded coaching to provide the necessary support to current early childhood educators is organized below:



**SOLUTION**

Increasing the diversity of the licensed ECE teacher workforce requires the support of institutions of higher education to provide oversight for the professional development and educational attainment needs of all teacher candidates. Building a diverse teacher workforce is important for student outcomes. Though many policy solutions have focused on alternative pathways or incentives to encourage people of color to teach, analysis shows that the most important first step is getting people of color through college. By expanding the pool of college graduates, the pool of potential teachers expands.

Current higher education systems must partner with Early Childhood Programs to create more robust professional development and credentialing pathways. These pathways need to provide individualized coaching to teacher candidates and support them through the completion of their bachelor’s degree and/or

PEL. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Policy Statement on Early Childhood Career Pathways provides specific recommendations for institutions of higher education and state agencies to provide “career advancement pathways with meaningful supports needed for individuals” in the early childhood workforce.<sup>11</sup> Job-embedded coaching is just one of the supports needed to strengthen the early childhood workforce. In addition, it is necessary to provide financial support and flexible options within higher education programs such as cohorts for working professionals on nights/weekends and online options that consider the needs of the current ECE workforce.

For this workforce diversity to be obtained, there need to be clear pathways and intentional supports in place that ensure teachers will be empowered and successful. Recommendations include:

- In-person, consistent career, and academic advising.
- Professional development plans that are individualized to teacher goals.
- Professional development that can earn teachers course credit through partnerships with Institutions of Higher Education.
- Focus on the equity-based components that support teachers of color to complete degrees that will advance their credentials and ability for promotion within the workforce. These supports include immersive advising and mentoring within the workplace that aligns to expectations of academic institutions.
- Ongoing partnerships between community-based organizations and higher education institutions, specifically those staff actively attend.
- Incentives to programs and organizations that implement in-house mentoring and environmental supports within the organization that engage teachers and ensure they are able to complete academic requirements and credentials, not just quarterly “fly by” check-ins to ensure active enrollment in courses.

## OUTCOME

According to the Illinois Career Information System and Illinois Department of Employment Security, the necessity for well-prepared teachers is anticipated to

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<sup>11</sup> Main, C. & Yarbrough, K.W. (2018). Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce: A Call to Action for the State of Illinois.

increase by nearly 10 percent in the next six years.<sup>12</sup> The experiences and relationships children encounter in the first five years sets the foundation for future learning and development through their lifetime. Every year, the population of early learners across the country grows increasingly diverse. Given the linguistic and cultural diversity of children in early childhood classrooms, early childhood educators must not only possess a strong knowledge of child development and early learning practices but must also be able to support children linguistically and culturally in early learning environments.<sup>13</sup>

Tapping into systems such as the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Quality Taskforce provides potential infrastructure and allows for specific initiatives that would build off of the principles noted in the taskforce's 2019 consensus statement, which posits that early childhood educators should reflect the families and communities they serve. Seeing their own identities reflected in their teachers can improve students' perceptions of and performance in school.<sup>14</sup> Institutions of higher education could tap into the \$1.3 million in grants that was recently awarded to the Illinois Higher Board of Education (IHBE), which is geared towards strengthening the early childhood workforce. According to Senator Kimberly Lightford, these grants will be used by colleges and universities to help early childhood educators gain a credential or degree. The funds can be used for supports like personalized advising and mentoring, job-embedded coaching, technology access, transportation, child care and supports for course fees.<sup>15</sup>

Continued credentialing and degree completion initiatives that focus on the specific needs of current early childhood educators and provide job-embedded coaching will support the ever-growing need to align the diversity of licensed teachers within the early childhood workforce with the children and families that are served.

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<sup>12</sup> Illinois Department of Employment Security: long-term industry projections 2016-2026  
[https://www2.illinois.gov/ides/Imi/Pages/Employment\\_Projections.aspx](https://www2.illinois.gov/ides/Imi/Pages/Employment_Projections.aspx)

<sup>13</sup> Zinsser, K.M., Main, C., Torres, L. & Connor, K. (2019). Patching the Pathway and Widening the Pipeline: Models for Developing a Diverse Early Childhood Workforce in Chicago. *American Journal of Community Psychology*

<sup>14</sup> Quality Committee of the Governor's office of Early Childhood Consensus Statement on Early Childhood Educator Compensation August 2019

<sup>15</sup> May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020. <https://www.illinoisenatedemocrats.com/sen-lightford-home/8429-lightford-ibhe-to-use-1-3m-to-improve-early-childhood-education>

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# Workforce Tools/Processes

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## PROBLEM

Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) Black and Latinx students meet or exceed Illinois 3rd grade English Language Arts (ELA) standards at less than half the rate of white students. According to national research, these literacy achievement gaps can have significant impacts on students' long-term educational success. Monitoring the early literacy development of students is critically important to ensuring they are mastering the foundational skills necessary to be successful readers and writers in later years. In order to respond to students' learning needs, CPS teachers, families, principals, and district leaders need high-quality, comparable information about students' early literacy skill development. CPS does not currently collect comparable kindergarten through second grade (K-2) literacy assessment data for all students, making it challenging to develop effective systems to close early literacy achievement gaps.

## CAUSE

CPS systems are not effectively serving Black and Latinx students, who account for 82.5 percent of the total CPS student population. Current CPS K-2 assessment policies contribute to inequitable outcomes for students. CPS' early grades assessment system is fragmented, which creates challenges for understanding how well students are learning, programs are operating, and schools are serving students before they reach 3rd grade.

Furthermore, inequitable early literacy outcomes for these student groups bear out in the 3rd grade state assessment data. In School Year (SY) 2017-18, only 27 percent and 33 percent of Black and Latinx students, respectively, met or exceeded expectations on the state English Language Arts (ELA) assessment. In SY 2018-19, those numbers increased to 30 percent and 37 percent. In contrast, 67 percent of White students met or exceeded expectations in SY17-18, growing to 70 percent in SY18-19.



Research demonstrates that these early literacy opportunity and achievement gaps can have a significant impact on students’ long-term trajectories. A longitudinal study supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation concluded that students who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely not to graduate from high school than proficient readers. The study reported that these risks were even more acute for students of color with limited access to resources. Thirty-one percent of Black and 33 percent of Latinx students who lived in households earning less than the federal poverty line for at least one year, and were not reading proficiently in third grade, ended up not finishing high school.<sup>1</sup>

This risk for our earliest learners is heightened by the impact of COVID-19. A preliminary forecast of learning loss due to COVID-19 by NWEA demonstrated the possibility for major impacts on student achievement, with larger impacts for younger students.<sup>2</sup> This new reality increases the importance and urgency to develop systems that serve all students’ learning needs.

As stated in the CPS Five-Year Vision, “schools have a range of options to choose from for K-2 assessments that help them know and understand student progress. The assessments they select vary from school to school, oftentimes making it difficult for families who transfer schools and for data-based strategies to be developed to support student learning” (p. 18).

The table below shows the early literacy assessment tools that district-managed schools selected in SY19.

SY19 K-2 Literacy Assessments		
K-2 Literacy Assessment	SY 19 Schools (N)	SY 19 Schools (%)
Amplify TRC/DIBELS	285	67%
NWEA MAP Growth K-2 Reading	86	21%
Fountas & Pinnell BAS	43	10%
OTHER	9	2%

<sup>1</sup> Hernandez, D. Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation

<sup>2</sup> Kuhfeld, M. & Tarasawa, B. (2020). The COVID-19 slide: What summer learning loss can tell us about the potential impact of school closures on student academic achievement. NWEA

Even though schools select literacy assessments, implementation has been inconsistent. An internal review of three years of available K-2 assessment data showed that 1 out of every 6 students did not have an early literacy end-of-year test score. Black students were overrepresented in this group, which is especially concerning given they are the student group with the lowest 3rd grade literacy achievement.

In addition, year-to-year changes in CPS schools' K-2 assessment selections have doubled since 2014, making it even more likely schools will not have consistent assessment scores for students across years. As a result, internal research shows that no more than 40 percent of the annualized K-2 population was assessed using the same assessment tool between SY15 and SY17, and between 14-19 percent of the annualized K-2 population did not have any centrally reported literacy results over that same period.

Without consistent, high-quality information about how well students are learning, the district and schools are unable to respond effectively to address student learning needs.

## **SOLUTION**

CPS should pursue a comprehensive strategy to address early literacy achievement gaps, with developmentally appropriate assessments as a core component. CPS should:

- Adopt and administer a common, research-based K-2 literacy assessment program across the district.
- Provide professional development to teachers and schools leaders for how to administer the assessment, interpret the results, and use the information to improve instruction and strengthen school-family partnerships.

National leaders in early grades systems support this approach. The National P-3 Center has developed the P-3 Framework, which is designed to support districts in the development and implementation of comprehensive PreK-3rd grade approaches. A core component of this quality framework implementation includes use of “common and consistent diagnostic and screening assessments, across age/grade levels, to identify children who need extra help and connect them with support services and supplemental instruction.”

In order to implement this strategy, CPS should:

- Engage with principals and teachers to understand what information is instructionally valuable to them.
- Partner with reputable research institutions to define the key characteristics of high-quality, early literacy assessments.
- Launch a procurement process to identify an early literacy assessment partner.
- Collaborate with the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) to establish the enabling conditions for strategy implementation

As a result of the strategy, CPS schools will have access to consistent, high-quality and meaningful data to guide school and teacher practice. The district will be able to use this data to respond to school needs, improve programs, and inform future district initiatives to support young learners and close early literacy achievement gaps.

## **OUTCOME**

CPS' mission is "to provide a high-quality public education for every child, in every neighborhood, that prepares each for success in college, career, and civic life." Successful preparation for college, career, and civic life starts in students' earliest years. By implementing common, high-quality early literacy assessments in grades K-2 and supporting educators in using that information, CPS can help narrow achievement gaps and create equitable educational opportunities for all students.

## PROBLEM

Early Childhood community-based organizations are failing to effectively execute new employee onboarding protocols. As a result, they experience high employee turnover, poor performance and lack of engagement. Despite recognizing the importance of such processes, community-based leaders still struggle with designing an onboarding plan that is consistent, creative and engaging. In addition, there is a lack of personal touch that could ease the transition for new hires.

Ineffective onboarding is a major contributor to high employee turnover, low productivity and limited engagement. The organizational costs are both symbolic and financial, leading to a negative public reputation and a significant impact to the bottom line. Too often, hiring supervisors overlook that the process starts as soon as the candidate agrees to be interviewed for the position. Onboarding typically takes a new hire about six months to a year to fully integrate into the role.

The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA) reported a national turnover rate for providers between 25- 40 percent in 2012. More recent and local data from the Illinois Department of Human Services indicate a similar outcome with a trending increase in turnover according to the position and over the years:

**Turnover rate (individual position level) by position: FY 2013-FY 2017<sup>1</sup>**

Position	FY 2013	FY 2015	FY 2017
Administrative Director	10%	16%	15%
Director/Teacher	16%	23%	24%
Early Childhood Teacher	26%	27%	34%
Early Childhood Assistant	33%	34%	39%
School-Age Worker	28%	25%	40%
School-Age Assistant	34%	33%	32%

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=105548>

## CAUSE

A critical step in the onboarding process is to ensure organizational values, culture, mission and vision support the integration of new employees and that their position and purpose aligns with the organization. Some contributing factors associated with an ineffective onboarding process in early childhood community-based organizations:

- Lack of explicit protocol for implementation
- Immediate supervisor is overstretched and unable to devote attention and resources to the process
- Unrealistic and mismatched expectations for new hires
- Conflicting implementation requirements dictated by funders
- Lack of partnership with higher education institutions to support this component of the provision of early care and education

These factors significantly undermine work performance and productivity.

## SOLUTION

Effective onboarding has proven to reduce staff turnover. In fact, companies that devote attention and resources report first-year retention rates of up to 91 percent. However, it is not a happenstance because onboarding new employees is a process that requires formal and informal orientation, training, coaching, mentoring, goal setting, and feedback process.<sup>2</sup> While there are core components that are universal, it also requires planning to tailor the process to each new employee depending on the position. It is paramount for community-based organizations to implement best practices for employee onboarding. The effort needs reform at three levels: institutions of higher education, funders, and within the community-based organization.

- **Partner with higher educational institutions.** Community-based and higher education institutions in Illinois should partner to ensure coursework introduces students to the distinctions for working in a community-based setting versus school-based settings. Offering Continuing Education Units for a wide range of trainings specific to how best to facilitate staff retention could also be explored.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/head-start-programs> [Accessed 13 Feb. 2020]

- **Build consensus amongst funders.** Early childhood community-based programs are funded through multiple sources (private and public, local, state, and federal). The distinct requirements and expectations pose challenges with implementing effective recruiting and onboarding of early childhood staff. Funders must revisit expectations and build consensus on developing a common set of deliverables. Furthermore, funders should incent effective onboarding by providing resources that could cover professional development and training.
- **Create a protocol for new hires before and after hiring.** Ensure that all community-based organizations have an onboarding protocol that includes a series of steps and tasks for new hires such as training, meetings with key staff, job embedded learning, mentoring, coaching, supervision, shadowing and roundtable discussions.
- **Include supervisors early and often.** Incent and support supervisors to assure their practice reinforces the vitalness of effective employee onboarding for the organization. Furthermore, reinforce this process by measuring results and tracking success of new hires. Supervisors are accountable to the process and should be supported in proactively facilitating the effective integration of new hires from start to finish.
- **Demonstrate and practice transparency during recruitment and hiring process.** Community-based organizations must ensure candidates and new hires have an in-depth idea of the culture, environment, and values of the hiring organization. Organizations should be transparent by providing accurate job descriptions, direct and open communication, orientation to the site and workspace, coordinating classroom observations for teaching staff, and realistic expectations on the role.

## OUTCOME

An effective onboarding process provides new employees opportunities to feel welcomed, understand expectations, and feel confident in their ability to make an impact within the organization. A transparent and supported process can positively effect engagement, job satisfaction, performance and ultimately retention of employees. Consistency and retention of employees in community-based programs lead to positive outcomes for children and families. Children develop strong attachments, a sense of trust and healthy relationships with the significant adults in their lives. Families are engaged and work with staff toward meeting program and family benchmarks that build positive and goal-oriented relationships and improve children's learning and development.

## PROBLEM

Due to the multiple funding streams that support evidence-based home visiting programs (HV), parent educators (PEs), also referred to as home visitors, face burdensome and often duplicative data entry requirements. Having to enter the same information on enrollment, family visits, goals, developmental assessments, and surveys into multiple data systems is contributing to home visitor burn-out and high turnover from programs at rapid rates.

The Illinois home visiting system is supported by two federal funding streams: Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV) and Early Head Start (EHS). In addition, the system is supported by two state funding streams, the Prevention Initiative (PI) program managed by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Parents Too Soon and Healthy Families managed by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS).<sup>1</sup> The lack of alignment and communication between these funders causes high turnover rates, especially at organizations that blend funding. PEs are spending significant time entering data that imposes on time that should be dedicated to the intent of the program—developing strong, supportive relationships with families to help them reach their goals and full potential.

Each unique data system calls for measuring different sets of required outcomes dictated by each funder. Funders at the federal, state, and local levels have selected different priorities to inform the measurement of supporting children's development. Some emphasize the performance measurement of improving maternal, newborn and child health or reducing crime and domestic violence. Other funders focus on parent engagement and school readiness.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, some requirements are the same, mandating PEs to complete dual data entry of the same information on a daily basis. For these reasons, the various public funding streams are not streamlined into a coordinated system for financing early learning programs.

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<sup>1</sup> Schwartz, Lesley Systems Alignment/Coordination Policy Memo. (May2019). Retrieved from: <https://erikson.sharepoint.com>

<sup>2</sup> Barnett, W. Steven and Hustedt, Jason T. Improving Public Financing for Early Learning Programs. (April 2011). Retrieved from: [www.nieer.org](http://www.nieer.org)

Illinois MIECHV surveyed 12 program supervisors who estimated their home visitors spent upwards of 15 hours per week on data entry, equating to 40 percent of their time. Supervisors cited using between two and three different data systems concurrently. Across Illinois, there are at least seven different data systems in use.<sup>3</sup>

## CAUSE

The 2017 MIECHV Annual Benchmark and Outcome Technical report states that the increase of staff turnover, from 22 to 36 percent, is due to a variety of factors including: relatively low pay; insecure and unstable funding; and the unique challenges and demands of providing home-based services to populations in neighborhoods and communities in need of additional support.<sup>4</sup> The laborious task of tracking multiple requirements and entering that information in more than one system can contribute to PE stress and burn-out in the short term and ultimately lead to resignation. Retaining effective staff is imperative to the mission of home visiting as continuity of care is essential to achieving outcomes.

Many home visitors derive great satisfaction from their work—finding the work interesting and rewarding, valuing the relationships they develop with families, and feeling a sense of accomplishment as they support families' growth. A study conducted with 10 Florida MIECHV programs found that in seven of the 10 sites, home visitors expressed that, sometimes, required documentation interfered with their ability to optimally engage with participants during their visits. One home visitor explained that excessive paperwork “really puts a barrier and monkey wrench” in their visits. Furthermore, home visitors in eight of the 10 sites felt that their personal connection with families was not given the same level of importance as the outcome data captured through required documentation. As one home visitor said: “Unfortunately, the funders are not there to see, *‘Hey, you have a pregnant mom with twins who’s afraid to go out, and you manage to get this lady to get a job, to get her child into daycare’*...What the funder is seeing is, *“Are those women going to the hospital, how many times are they going to the ER(Emergency Room)? Are they going to*

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<sup>3</sup> Schwartz, Lesley Systems Alignment/Coordination Policy Memo. (May2019). Retrieved from: <https://erikson.sharepoint.com>

<sup>4</sup>University of IL, CPRD, IL MIECHV (2017) MIECHV 5th Annual Benchmark and Outcome Technical Report, FY 2017.



*the ER less? Are they up-to-date with immunization?’ That’s what they care about, and that’s the difference.”<sup>5</sup>*

Duplicative data entry is not cost effective. It takes seasoned staff 10 to 15 minutes to enter enrollment information for one family, yet new hires could take longer. Additionally, human error and omissions could compromise the validity of outcomes. Without accurate information, the adverse impact is great for organizations, as well as families. By devoting 40 percent of work hours to data entry, the well-being of families and children is at stake.

There is a lack of coordination and streamlining of data entry system requirements between multiple funding streams and programs. It is imperative that stakeholders be involved in the provisions of service delivery to make HV operational. In addition to state and federal agencies, there are five national HV models in use in Illinois, each with its own national organization, community collaboratives, researchers/evaluators, and private funders. Each stakeholder has unique goals, objectives, and information sought. Even though there have been several national initiatives to standardize HV, such as the MIECHV benchmarks and the PEW Data Initiative, no single process or set of requirements have been adopted by Illinois.<sup>6</sup>

An effective and sustained workforce is instrumental in delivering high-quality, home visiting services to families. A state-level system of early childhood programs and services for children from birth to age five can exist under governance models that promote efficiency, excellence, and equity.<sup>7</sup> There are advisory committees and task forces currently structured that could advise childhood programs on best practices and serve as tremendous allies in pursuit for superior governance. The Illinois Early Learning Council (ELC), a public-private partnership created by Public Act 93-380, strengthens, coordinates and expands programs and services for children, birth to five, throughout Illinois. The ELC builds on current programs to ensure a comprehensive, statewide early learning system to improve the lives of Illinois children and families.<sup>8</sup> The Home Visiting Task Force (HVTF) advances a comprehensive vision for home visiting that includes improving the quality of and access to evidence-based home

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<sup>5</sup> Alitz, P.J., Geary, S., Birriel, P.C. et al. Work-Related Stressors Among Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Home Visitors: A Qualitative Study. *Matern Child Health J* 22, 62–69 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-018-2536-8>

<sup>6</sup> Schwartz, Lesley Systems Alignment/Coordination Policy Memo. (May2019). Retrieved from: <https://erikson.sharepoint.com>

<sup>7</sup> Regenstein, E. and Lipper, K. A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood Governance System. (May 2013). Retrieved from: [www.buildinitiative.org](http://www.buildinitiative.org)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/EarlyLearningCouncil/Pages/default.aspx>

visiting programs for families that meet eligibility requirements; increasing coordination between home visiting programs at the state and local levels, as well as between home visiting and all other publicly-funded services for families; and serves as the advisory body for Illinois' federal (MIECHV) grant program.<sup>9</sup> An effective model of governance would create coherent policies and services, but current systems of early childhood governance typically are fragmented.

## **SOLUTION**

The solution begins by introducing the concept of governance, structured by coordination and adaptation. A coordinated data system would strengthen the accountability and quality of home visiting programs. There would be less time spent entering and managing data and more time focused on meeting the needs and mitigating the risks factors facing families in addition to having more meaningful, reflective supervision among home visitors and their supervisors.

Achieving a coordinated data system requires feedback from key stakeholders who represent the early childhood workforce to determine which system best captures the most meaningful quantitative and qualitative data requirements. The ELC, HVTF, HV funders, HV staff and parents coming together for this planning process can ensure greater accountability.

The Data, Research, and Evaluation (DRE) subcommittee of the ELC could contribute to designing a solution by highlighting areas where existing data systems are duplicative. Additionally, a crosswalk of the data required by funders and programs could inform a plan that outlines improvements by articulating data collection standards and how programs can remain committed to the intended outcomes. This process will foster alignment of data components across programs and determine the best common system to use.

In addition, all HV models should adopt a common set of high-quality program requirements and data standards. The MIECHV benchmarks set the bar high for performance indicators and system outcomes and includes a total of 19 measures across the six benchmarks:

- Improvements in maternal, newborn, and child health;
- Prevention of child injuries, child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment and reductions of emergency room visits;
- Improvements in school readiness and child academic achievement;

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/OECD/EarlyLearningCouncil/Pages/default.aspx>

- Reductions in crime or domestic violence;
- Improvements in family economic self-sufficiency; and
- Improvements in the coordination and referrals for other community resources and supports.<sup>10</sup>

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) provides a detailed diagram in the MIECHV Performance Indicators and System Outcomes report by providing the 19 measurements and interventions for each construct.<sup>11</sup>

## OUTCOME

A cohesive data system that is used by all HV programs in Illinois will contribute to decreasing the turnover rate by:

- Reducing PEs' focus on data entry, which is a source of stress.
- Allowing for more time to make meaningful connections with families.
- Providing PEs more opportunities to reflect on their reactions from supporting families and observing child development during reflective supervision.
- Fostering greater stability in the early childhood workforce.

The collaboration between stakeholders and early childhood professionals to achieve a more cohesive data system will:

- Align reporting of enrollment data across the major funders of home visiting to better inform resource allocation, and provide disaggregated data on participant demographics and workforce composition.
- Streamline funding and monitoring processes across home visiting funders at the state level, improving access to funding and greater coherence in program quality for local home visiting agencies.
- Better inform where and how funds should be allocated based on program outcomes and achievements.

<sup>10</sup> Data, Evaluation, & Continuous Quality Improvement, The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program Partnering with Parents to Help Children Succeed, A Program Brief. (April 2020). Retrieved from: [mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/MaternalChildHealthInitiatives/HomeVisiting/pdf/programbrief.pdf](https://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/MaternalChildHealthInitiatives/HomeVisiting/pdf/programbrief.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from: [https://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/MaternalChildHealthInitiatives/HomeVisiting/Federal\\_Home\\_Visiting\\_Program\\_Performance\\_Indicators\\_and\\_Systems\\_Outcomes\\_Summary.pdf](https://mchb.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/mchb/MaternalChildHealthInitiatives/HomeVisiting/Federal_Home_Visiting_Program_Performance_Indicators_and_Systems_Outcomes_Summary.pdf)

## PROBLEM

Licensed Family Childcare (FCC)<sup>1</sup> makes up a large portion of early childhood care services for families, particularly in underserved communities. Nationally, an estimated 7 million children between the ages of 0-5 were cared for by 3.8 million home-based childcare providers as of 2016.<sup>2</sup> The *Illinois Department of Health Services 2018 Annual Child Care Report* identified 7,445 licensed family care homes with the capacity to care for 72,673 children.<sup>3</sup> FCC is often the most accessible form of child care for families and are provided by members of their own communities. However, little is known about the child outcomes resulting from FCC in the areas of cognitive, language and social-emotional development— all domains related to kindergarten readiness. Research shows that differences in kindergarten scores have been correlated to children's early childhood education experiences.<sup>4</sup> Determining structured quality improvement procedures relevant to FCC could further enrich these environments and create opportunities to gather data around family supports and child outcomes foundational to kindergarten readiness.

In Illinois, the platform, ExceleRate, is used to promote quality care among child care models, awarding ranked Circles of Quality. Quality domains include Teaching and Learning and Family and Community Engagement. While it outlines criteria for these domains, given the difference in service delivery, FCC providers encounter challenges in meeting the criteria to achieve Circles of Quality beyond the foundational requirement of being licensed. Examples of challenges include limited resources with regard to personal, record keeping, connections to or knowledge of community resources for parents, identifying

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<sup>1</sup> Licenses Family Childcare (FCC) is often referred to as FCC or Home Based Childcare (HBCC) in empirical research and childcare literature. For the purposes of this memo, FCC will be used to reference this model of childcare

<sup>2</sup> National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2015). Fact Sheet: Who is Providing Home-Based Early Care and Education? OPRE Report No. 2015-43, Washington DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Available at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/research/project/national-survey-of-early-care-and-education-nsece-2010-2014>.

<sup>3</sup> Retrieved From: <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=105333>

<sup>4</sup> NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. "Early Child Care and Children's Development Prior to School Entry: Results from the NICHD Study of Early Child Care." *American Educational Research Journal*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2002, pp. 133–164. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3202474](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3202474).

and implementing curricula, caring for mixed age groups, differences in environment of service delivery, and service hours.<sup>5</sup>

Many of the qualifiers and steps listed to obtain additional Circles of Quality are designed for child-care centers but present barriers to FCC. FCC is not homogenous and is characterized by a variety of needs that differ from center-based facilities. According to the *Illinois Department of Health Services 2017 Salary and Staffing Survey of Licensed Child Care Facilities*, of the 987 survey respondents, 88.4 percent had obtained the foundational licensure Circle of Quality, but only 11.6 percent had achieved any quality level beyond being licensed.<sup>6</sup> ExceleRate Illinois offers subsidy incentives for FCC providers to achieve higher Circles of Quality. However, access issues specific to FCC achieving these higher levels of quality prevent facilities from receiving these benefits. The need for further development of policies and initiatives that promote research, inclusion and addressing the unique needs and strengths of FCC persists. Without relevant processes and improved resources for quality improvement, the field misses the opportunity to identify child and family outcomes unique to FCC.

## CAUSE

A large portion of families utilizing FCC are from communities of color with limited resources. Parents rely on FCC because of location, affordability and familiarity/relatability with staff. These facilities also allow for families to bring their children across ages to one location to be cared for. Despite these appealing factors, ambiguity about the quality of FCC remains a concern within the field. Initial studies have shown mixed quality results for FCC, with findings leaning towards lower quality ratings. Many of the children in FCC are at increased risk for not reaching developmental milestones necessary for school readiness. Discrepancies around quality in FCC exacerbate this issue.<sup>7</sup>

Many quality regulations assume child care is provided in a center-based setting. FCC does not take place in school classrooms, do not involve a network of teachers, providers have mixed educational backgrounds in child development, and providers vary in terms of focus on child development.

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<sup>5</sup> Diane Paulsell & Toni Porter & Gretchen Kirby & Kimberly Boller & Emily Sama Martin & Andrew Burwick & Christine Ross & Carol Begnoche, "undated". "Supporting Quality in Home-Based Child Care Initiative: Design and Evaluation Options," Mathematica Policy Research Reports 3887af819cdc4b2e9f0e830c0, Mathematica Policy Research.

<sup>6</sup> Retrieved From: [https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=105548#a\\_toc10](https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=105548#a_toc10)

<sup>7</sup> Diane Paulsell & Toni Porter & Gretchen Kirby & Kimberly Boller & Emily Sama Martin & Andrew Burwick & Christine Ross & Carol Begnoche, "undated". "Supporting Quality in Home-Based Child Care Initiative: Design and Evaluation Options," Mathematica Policy Research Reports 3887af819cdc4b2e9f0e830c0, Mathematica Policy Research.

Health, safety and operations have historically been the main focus of FCC sites looking to acquire and maintain licensure and do not include indicators of supporting cognitive and language development. There are also a number of FCC providers who are not licensed despite meeting the requirements for licensure. Caretakers who do not pursue required licensing are likely to face even more challenges that may prevent them from focusing on quality improvement in their care. Policies and procedures that do not reflect the diverse structural needs of FCC prevent implementation of quality improvement practices for FCC.

Additional complicating factors for the inclusion of early education quality requirements in FCC are providers' motivation and self-perception within the field. Providers state that operating an FCC is their primary source of income and that they enjoy caring for children.<sup>8</sup> Of the motivations reported, neither directly correlate to FCC owners seeing themselves as educators or liaisons for community resources. Quality improvement domains are focused on school readiness and family stability.

FCC providers face challenges that center-based childcare services do not. Childcare centers are situated in an established early childhood education system with regulations and resources. Although FCC receive subsidies that allow access to care for parents and a source of revenue for providers, providers must cover costs for materials and maintenance of their homes to meet health and safety requirements. In addition to funding needs, FCC tend to have less staff and, in some cases, may be operated by one person. On average, providers spent 50.7 hours caring for children and an additional 16 hours on business-related activities.<sup>9</sup> Without quality improvement procedures tailored to FCC, providers are less likely to address quality domains. Providers may lack knowledge and resources about obtaining and maintaining licensure, best practices for receiving payment from subsidies and families, managing operations, and access to government resources. Lastly, the number and geographical locations of FCC also make it arduous to provide resources and quality improvement in-service to these facilities.

FCC regulation and facility requirements vary from state to state. This complicates defining best practice models for FCC providing quality care to families in their communities. Recent research has promoted network models that share center-based resources with FCC, however these approaches also

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<sup>8</sup> Retrieved From: [https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=105548#a\\_toc10](https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=105548#a_toc10)

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved From: [https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=105548#a\\_toc10](https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=105548#a_toc10)

vary significantly from state to state. Similarly to center-based care, the early childhood educational background of caretakers varies. Gaining more insight into the early childhood education of FCC caretakers can be even more difficult given the heterogeneity of these professionals. Due to their variability of services and lack of a unified infrastructure, FCC is limited in representation and voice with regard to their contribution and unique circumstances within the child care sector.

Finally, the variable factors of FCC make it difficult to determine family and child outcomes in child development, school readiness and family stability. There is little research available that addresses the outcomes of FCC and how the general landscape of FCC creates research barriers. There have also been debates within the research about which rating scales are best to use when examining quality improvement in FCC. This conflict arises because the varied scales and tools used to evaluate child-care are more aligned with center-based care and do not easily translate to FCC.<sup>10</sup> Without research supported outcomes, it is challenging to inform change and encourage investment supported by legislature and state practices for quality improvement within FCC. Given the large number of families who rely on FCC to care for their children between the ages of 0-5, vital data are missing around how children receiving this form of child care fair academically upon entering grade school.

## SOLUTION

**Recommendation One:** One policy proposal for improving FCC quality is utilizing home-visiting models. Home visitors are trained to partner with families using a relationship and strength-based approach. Home visiting models support child well-being, parent needs, and supporting language and cognitive development. These components are relevant to supporting quality for FCC.

Home visitors support FCC providers by coming to their location, learn first-hand about specific needs and observe strengths of FCC. Home visiting models are adapted to account for the structure of FCC. Home visiting models that have been adapted and have informally shown initial gains include ParentChild+, Parents As Teachers and HIPPIY USA.<sup>11</sup> Practices from each model that

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<sup>10</sup> Goodson, B.D. & Layzer, J.I. (2010). *Defining and Measuring Quality in Home-Based Care Settings*, OPRE Research-to-Policy, Research-to-Practice Brief OPRE 2011-10d. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from: [https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FCD-Curricula-Brief\\_ChildTrends\\_Sept2019.pdf](https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FCD-Curricula-Brief_ChildTrends_Sept2019.pdf)

supported quality improvement were relationship-based professional development (ParentChild+), building child development knowledge (Parents As Teachers) and parent/family engagement (HIPPPY USA).<sup>12</sup> Implementing pilot networks of home-visitors across regions of Illinois could inform elements of each model that can be adopted for the purposes of research and practices that support FCC. A home visiting method would allow for quality improvement content to reach rural areas of Illinois through technology use.

**Recommendation Two:** The skillset of home-visitors is applicable to collaborating with FCC providers. However, there are differences in the settings of FCC that will require home visitors to receive additional training. Home visitor models support knowledge of child development from 0-5. Supporting child development for FCC would require the expansion of this knowledge to school age children. Training should also include licensure requirements and regulations of FCC, the structure of the services provided, and engaging families.<sup>13</sup>

**Recommendation Three:** Researchers and regulation policy makers should continue to examine observation scales used to evaluate health, safety and quality in FCC facilities. Research outlines the pros and cons of various scales.<sup>14</sup> By analyzing these contrasts, new scales can be drafted and piloted. Focus groups of FCC providers should also be involved when creating evaluation scales to ensure that the differences in FCC from center-based care are accounted for. Pilots utilizing home visitors for quality improvement should also draw on the experiential expertise of home visitors to design tentative scales. Adaptation for data collection methods for home-visiting could also be examined for feasibility of evaluating quality within FCC.

**Recommendation Four:** Given the limited research on FCC, quality improvement research should focus on feasibility of different delivery models. Without appropriate and uniform methods for evaluating quality, conducting research that seek to identify child and family outcomes and causal relationships will be premature and problematic. The diversity in FCC may likely produce categories of delivery models that will inform the development of evaluation methods.

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<sup>12</sup> Retrieved from: [https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FCD-Curricula-Brief\\_ChildTrends\\_Sept2019.pdf](https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/FCD-Curricula-Brief_ChildTrends_Sept2019.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Bromer, J., Weaver, C. Supporting family child care and quality improvement: findings from an exploratory survey of Illinois child care resource and referral agency staff. ICEP10, 4 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-016-0020-8>

<sup>14</sup> Goodson, B.D. & Layzer, J.I. (2010). Defining and Measuring Quality in Home-Based Care Settings, OPRE Research-to-Policy, Research-to-Practice Brief OPRE 2011-10d. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Once feasible quality improvement methods for FCC are identified, subsequent research should utilize longitudinal study formats similar to research on center-based care to begin examining child and family outcomes.<sup>15</sup>

**Recommendation Five:** To address the limited number of FCC providers that have earned Circles of Quality beyond licensure, researchers and policy makers should design methods for gathering data around barriers to ExceleRate Illinois quality improvement guidelines. Questions regarding these obstacles may be included in the Salary and Staffing Survey of Licensed Child Care Facilities delivered through the Illinois Department of Human Services. Input from home visitors piloting collaboration with FCC providers could also reveal challenges to quality improvement with the ExceleRate Illinois system.

## OUTCOME

Customizing quality improvement methods to meet the needs of FCC will increase the likelihood of FCC providers engaging in systems such as ExceleRate Illinois. Therefore, providers would gain access to benefits associated with quality improvement, providing more incentive to engage in professional development for quality domains. Engaging more FCC providers in quality improvement systems will also raise awareness of resources available to them both in education advancement, funding sources and family resources. Increasing the quality of FCC in communities provides parents with more child care options that will support their children's language and cognitive development. Upon entering school, children will be better prepared and positioned to learn. Addressing the needs of FCC providers across domains, including quality improvement, will yield economic and academic benefits for generations of families.

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<sup>15</sup> Diane Paulsell & Toni Porter & Gretchen Kirby & Kimberly Boller & Emily Sama Martin & Andrew Burwick & Christine Ross & Carol Begnoche, "undated". "Supporting Quality in Home-Based Child Care Initiative: Design and Evaluation Options," Mathematica Policy Research Reports 3887af819cdc4b2e9f0e830c0, Mathematica Policy Research.

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# Workforce Training

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## PROBLEM

Illinois children are not receiving adequate foundational mathematics instruction in the early grades. Research shows that a child's early math ability is a strong predictor of later school success, even stronger than literacy ability or social-emotional skills.<sup>1</sup> However, in Illinois, over 31 percent of students in third through eighth grade met or exceeded math standards in 2019,<sup>2</sup> and only 33 percent of Illinois kindergarten students demonstrated math readiness on the 2018-2019 Illinois KIDS (Kindergarten Individual Development Survey) Assessment,<sup>3</sup> the lowest percentage of the three domains assessed.

These early indicators can continue to trend downward and lead to lower math achievement scores in later grades and have implications beyond school with reduced career options upon high school graduation.

Teachers and providers must be prepared to teach foundational mathematics to young children in all early childhood settings. A high-quality early childhood classroom is the ideal environment for creating a solid foundation in early mathematics. However, licensed child care providers are not required to have any college coursework in mathematics or how to facilitate a developmentally appropriate curiosity and mastery of math concepts, nor are they required to participate in early mathematics professional development.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics state that creating more effective early childhood teacher preparation and continuing professional development is a key way to support high-quality mathematics education.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/838411-school-readiness-study-greg-duncan-et-al.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.npr.org/local/309/2019/10/30/774779644/new-illinois-report-card-shows-minimal-test-score-gains>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/RMF19-001-KIDS%20Report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/position-statements/psmath.pdf>

## CAUSE

Typically, early childhood teacher and provider preparation and professional development have been heavily focused on literacy, with lesser emphasis on math, and disconnected from how the two skills correlate. Developing these two areas along with social-emotional skills are three critical domains for child development as evidenced by the areas of assessment in the KIDS.

The lack of early math education can lead to mathematics anxiety that can last through adulthood. Studies indicate that teachers with mathematics anxiety may pass along anxiety in their students that negatively affect student success in math.<sup>5</sup> Research suggests that many early childhood care and education practitioners do not see themselves as competent in math and, as a consequence, are less likely to provide intentional support for children's mathematical learning.<sup>6</sup>

Research on early mathematics and mathematics instruction is fairly new and has yet to be integrated into preservice teacher preparation programs. National surveys of two- and four-year early childhood education degree programs reveal that math content receives limited attention in most degree programs, and any math taught is typically within integrated curriculum classes that address multiple areas of learning.<sup>7</sup> Gateways to Opportunity provides approved trainings and a credentialing system for early childhood practitioners. That credential includes a module on language development but does not have a module for mathematical/logical thinking. Similar to pre-service programs, any math content is integrated into a module covering all cognitive development.

## SOLUTION

Early childhood educators enter the field with a wide range of educational qualifications and work in settings ranging from public schools to home child care programs. To reach as many early childhood teachers as possible, a minimum number of professional development hours in foundational mathematics must be offered to the early childhood workforce in Illinois.

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<sup>5</sup> Hembree, R. (1990). The nature, effects, and relief of mathematics anxiety. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 21(1), 33–46. & Martinez, J. G. (1987). Preventing math anxiety: A prescription. *Academic Therapy*, 23(2), 117–125.

<sup>6</sup> Copley, J.V. 2004. The early childhood collaborative: A professional development model to communicate and implement the standards. In *Engaging young children in mathematics: Standards for early childhood mathematics education*, eds. D.H. Clements, J. Sarama, & A.-M. DiBiase, 401–14. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum. & Ginsburg, H.P., S. Pappas, & K.-H. Seo. 2001. Everyday mathematical knowledge: Asking young children what is developmentally appropriate. In *Psychological perspectives on early childhood education: Reframing dilemmas in research and practice*, ed. S.L. Golbeck, 181–219. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

<sup>7</sup> Maxwell, K. L., Lim, C.-I., & Early, D. M. (2006). Early childhood teacher preparation programs in the United States: National report. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, FPG Child Development Institute.

The Illinois Early Learning Council, Illinois State Board of Education and Illinois Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Network of Child Care and Resource Referral Agencies should convene a task force to develop recommendations for seamless integration of foundational mathematics and early childhood pedagogy that is informed by early childhood learning research. These recommendations should incent institutions of higher education and professional development providers to ensure increased offerings and consistency of content provided to early childhood teachers and providers. Also, partnerships with informal education organizations, such as children's museums and libraries, can provide hands-on mathematics experiences to reinforce math learning in various contexts, not just in the classroom.

The effort to train early childhood professionals in foundational mathematics should be as broad as possible to meet the needs of the wide range of early childhood programs. However, a state-wide foundational mathematics professional development framework created by Illinois Gateways to Opportunity will guide training in an organized and coordinated way. As part of the state-wide effort to increase foundational mathematics content to preschool age children, a dashboard of progress will be created that includes number of teachers who completed mathematics training as well as programs and schools who demonstrate consistent and focused mathematics instruction.

## **OUTCOME**

High-quality early math is important for the prosperity of this country as our society becomes more complex with the integration of technology. It is also an issue of equity as children not exposed to quality early math instruction early in life might fall behind their peers and not have the opportunity to explore career options in fields such as engineering, business, and the sciences. Foundational mathematics is an essential subject in the early years. Math is not a luxury. Early childhood teachers must be able to confidently teach foundational mathematics. To achieve this outcome, all early childhood teachers in Illinois must have the opportunity to learn how to appropriately teach foundational mathematics to young children. Through a coordinated state-wide effort, well-trained professional development providers will engage early childhood teachers in professional development to increase teachers' confidence and competence in mathematics. These trained early childhood teachers will break the cycle of math anxiety and prepare young children, regardless of family income level, to demonstrate math proficiency, providing opportunities for Illinois' students to explore all career options in the future.

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## PROBLEM

Illinois is in grave danger of widening the opportunity gap. The gap is even greater for English language learners, students of color, students with learning differences and those furthest from opportunity. Research has shown that early learning is a critical strategy in closing the achievement gap. While Illinois values early learning and has increased funding and opportunities for young learners, public schools are not held accountable for what is done in the early years until third grade.

In 2019, our current system failed 63 percent of our children who were not properly prepared to meet the English Language Arts standards on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness. Students who are behind will be expected to make more than a grade's worth of growth in a year to catch up, and that is not easy. An analysis produced by Stanford's Sean Reardon in 2014, shows districts ranked as top performers in the country make 13 months of growth a year or five and a half years of growth during a five-year period.<sup>1</sup> Even in many above-average performing districts, a cohort of children that is more than a year behind in second grade will not catch up by the end of high school. Given the data, state accountability systems, school improvement initiatives, and school funding mechanisms could benefit from greater focus on the years leading up to third grade.

Schools are not responsible for creating achievement gaps prior to school entry. The gap is present before kindergarten and is relatively consistent through 12th grade. By the time children enter kindergarten, the gaps reflected in socio-economic status and disaggregated by race ethnicity are dramatic and deeply entrenched. Data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K), a large, nationally representative survey, show that at kindergarten entry, the average cognitive scores of children from high socioeconomic backgrounds are

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<sup>1</sup> Elliot Regenstein, *Why the K-12 World Hasn't Embraced Early Learning* (Foresight Law+Policy February 2019).

approximately three-fifths of a standard deviation higher than those of children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>2</sup> School leaders are largely focused on intervention systems to alleviate the gaps in the primary grades, rather than examining the early learning experiences that support school readiness at kindergarten entry. By shifting the focus to the early years, prevention becomes the strategy, as opposed to remediation.

States continue to utilize and refine their accountability systems to inform interventions for closing gaps. Evidence is varied on the effectiveness of this strategy, but many agree that accountability systems have the ability to change local behavior.<sup>3</sup> Often, goals that get monitored are more likely to be realized. In improving outcomes for children, it is critical to recognize that beginning accountability in third grade will not eradicate the reading gap, nor guarantee improved high school graduation rates.

## CAUSE

Federal accountability during the No Child Left Behind era created school improvement systems designed to focus on proficiency test scores and graduation rates. Under the current federal education accountability law, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states have been given more flexibility in defining the success of schools, however, proficiency and graduation rates remain two critical factors. In 2017, ESSA required states to incorporate a preschool to second grade indicator in their individual accountability plan. This is a landmark effort in acknowledging the need to include early learning in accountability systems.

Local accountability plans that do not recognize or include the role of early learning experiences prior to kindergarten and are not leveraging this critical time for brain development, inevitably position schools to play catch up. School leaders frequently do not have a deep understanding of the importance of the early years and child development. A survey conducted by the National Association for Elementary School Principals found that only 20 percent of Elementary Principals felt they had a solid understanding of child development.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Elliot Regenstein, Maia Connors, and Rio Romero-Jurado, Valuing the Early Years in State Accountability Systems Under Every Student Succeeds Act (the Ounce: Policy Conversations (Conversations No.5 Version 1.0 February 16, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> National Association of Elementary School Principals; 2B Communications (Education Week August 18, 2015) <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/new-principals-a-data-snapshot.html>

A scan completed by the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes found that in most states early childhood content is not a required element of principal preparation or professional development.<sup>5</sup> In 2014, Illinois became the first state to include early childhood content and experiences in their principal preparation programs. However, there is not an ongoing requirement for professional learning in this area. Commonly, superintendents and district administrators come from secondary education and have little experience with primary grades, let alone early childhood. This significantly decreases the likelihood that accountability plans will include birth-to-age-five focused components.

The challenge that superintendents, central office administrators, and principals face is that early learning begins at birth and accountability systems focus on students that are currently attending their schools. This approach tends to leave community organizations and services that support students and families prior to official school entry out of the school improvement process.

## **SOLUTION**

State accountability measures in Illinois begin in third grade and are largely measuring student growth and proficiency. Attempting to solve the problem starting in third grade simply will not work, but high-quality early learning—particularly when well aligned to strong early elementary programs— can make a significant difference.<sup>6</sup>

In order to close the opportunity gap, it is important to understand that learning begins at birth and includes the early years leading up to kindergarten. District superintendents are in a unique position to ensure inclusion of early learning in their accountability plans. In order to include the birth to five landscape, superintendents will need to be actively engaged at community collaboration tables.

By increasing the capacity of school leaders and holding districts accountable for birth to third grade alignment, children's outcomes increase, and the state maximizes the efforts of the early learning system. Illinois became the first state in the nation to include early childhood content in principal preparation coursework. However, professional learning cannot end with the completion of the preparation program. Building district and school leadership capacity,

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<sup>5</sup> Kirsty Clarke Brown, PhD, Jim Squires, PhD, Lori Connors-Tadros, PhD, Michelle Horowitz, *Preparing Principals to Support Early Childhood Teachers* (Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes: CELLO *fastFACT* July 2014)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

through ongoing professional learning in early childhood, is needed to improve outcomes for children.

Embedding developmentally appropriate practice, alignment of birth to third grade, and the impact of early learning on school outcomes in the continuing education courses for maintaining administrator endorsements is a strategy that prioritizes early learning throughout the leader's tenure. If adopted by the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) Educator Effectiveness Division, this strategy ensures that both building- and district-level administrators enhance their skills and knowledge to support the inclusion of early learning into school accountability plans.

For superintendents and school board members, it is recommended that modules be developed to increase understanding of early learning and the need to include community partners, to improve student outcomes. With this understanding, local school boards and superintendents can utilize funding and resources to emphasize early learning in their ESSA plans.

The most comprehensive state accountability system begins at birth. ISBE should require additional early learning indicators in the ESSA plan to support the birth through third grade alignment for districts providing elementary education. Examples of indicators include:

- The number of students entering kindergarten with a high-quality early learning experience as defined by ExceleRate Illinois.<sup>7</sup>
- Collaboration in data sharing and shared professional learning with community early learning providers.
- Articulated and comprehensive transition plans.

## OUTCOME

By acknowledging that learning begins at birth, holding districts accountable for early learning outcomes and educating school leaders on child development and birth to third grade alignment, it sets a stronger foundation for a system that all children in Illinois deserve and facilitates lifelong success.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.exceletrateillinois.com/>



The inclusion of additional early learning indicators in state ESSA plans enhance the state's focus on the development of high-quality, coordinated Early Learning and Development Systems in Illinois that support all students entering school. These recommendations support the Illinois State Board of Education ESSA goals that every child in each public school in the State of Illinois deserves to attend a system wherein ...

1. All Kindergarteners are assessed for readiness.
2. 90 percent or more 3rd grade students are reading at or above grade level.
3. 90 percent or more 5th grade students meet or exceed expectations in mathematics.
4. 90 percent or more students are on track to graduate with their cohort at the end of 9th grade.
5. 90 percent or more students graduate from high school ready for college and career.

## PROBLEM

There are 35 million children in the United States who have experienced at least one traumatic event.<sup>1</sup> However, the early childhood workforce lacks the trauma-informed training and implementation support needed to best support children. Many early childhood educators are likely to encounter children who have experienced trauma, and the behavioral manifestations associated with trauma exposure can be disruptive to the learning environment.

Externalizing behaviors can have a negative effect on the teacher and the children who witness or are victims of those behaviors. Other negative effects include disruptions to routines, activities, and learning. Early childhood educators may experience high levels of stress and burnout, which can lead to a premature exit from the workforce at the very time that children need stable and consistent adult relationships.

Early childhood educators are not adequately trained in trauma-informed practices despite decades of data substantiating the problem and evidence of how this training can better equip educators. One study found that in a random sample of 765 teachers, only 9 percent reported receiving trauma training prior to entering the workforce.<sup>2</sup> Even when trauma-informed training is received, there is the risk of reverting to previous teaching practices that may or may not be trauma-informed. One-time workshops or surface-level coursework on trauma are less effective in changing teacher attitudes and teaching practices.

Early childhood educators need trauma-informed training and implementation support if they are to be successful in creating trauma-informed classrooms. The manifestations of trauma symptoms in the classroom can be overwhelming to preschool teachers. Deep training will assist in recognizing those symptoms and how to respond using trauma-informed approaches.

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<sup>1</sup> Helping Young Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: Policies and Strategies for Early Care and Education

<sup>2</sup> Alisic, E., Bus, M., Dulack, W., Pennings, L., & Splinter, J. (2012). Teachers' experiences supporting children after traumatic exposure. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 25, 98-101. doi: 10.1002/jts.20709.

## CAUSE

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood. Trauma is one possible outcome of exposure to adverse experiences. ACEs can include experiencing violence, abuse, neglect or witnessing violence in the home or community. Between 25 and 50 percent of children between ages 2 and 5 experience at least one or more potentially traumatic events.<sup>3</sup> Among children experiencing multiple environmental risk factors, studies estimated the prevalence of ACEs to be as high as 75 percent.<sup>4</sup> Exposure to ACEs can undermine brain development and present as emotional challenges such as disruptive behavior and impulsivity. Other challenges present as difficulties with eating, sleeping, and developing relationships.

Children who experience trauma are two-and-a-half times more likely to fail a grade in school than their peers who did not experience trauma. On standardized tests, they score lower than their peers and are more likely to be mislabeled for special education services and isolated in self-contained classrooms rather than be included in general education classrooms.<sup>5</sup> ACEs present in early childhood were associated with limited academic skills and challenging behavior in kindergarten, which are strong predictors of educational trajectory.

Despite the prevalence and impact of ACEs in early childhood, few early childhood educators are prepared to recognize and respond appropriately.<sup>6</sup> There are few early care and education training programs that offer comprehensive trauma-informed training nor is trauma-informed training a requirement that early childhood educators must satisfy prior to entering the workforce. Once in the workforce, early childhood educators might have access to these trainings or professional development opportunities, but they are usually one-time offerings without any implementation support. Without the additional layer of implementation support and coaching, it is unlikely that this newly acquired knowledge and skill translates into teaching practices.

## SOLUTION

The best solution is one that prevents ACEs from occurring. This requires policy changes at all levels of government and within multiple public service agencies.

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<sup>3</sup> Briggs-Gowan, Carter & Ford, 2012; Egger and Angold, 2006

<sup>4</sup> Roberts, Campbell, Ferguson & Crusto, 2013

<sup>5</sup> Cole et al. 2013; NCTSN 2008

<sup>6</sup> Preparing Trauma-Sensitive Teachers: Strategies for Teacher Educators

This also requires a dismantling of systemic/institutional racism that leads to the conditions where children of color are disproportionately impacted by community-level risk factors.

However, one shorter-term change that can be expanded over time is an in-service, trauma-informed training and implementation support program that is validated through continuing education units and supported by the training and technical assistance provided by local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies. Similar to the Pyramid Model piloted in Illinois, this training and implementation support model elevates many of the current training models by including the additional layer of train-the-trainer coaching. Coaches are early childhood educators trained in trauma-informed care and implementation support. Housed as a regional support model, it can be customized to local needs and fueled by on-the-ground leadership.

To narrow the scope of this pilot initiative and improve feasibility and fidelity, the geographic focus would cluster counties in each region where children were exposed to multiple risk factors and coupled with the lowest access to mental health supports as shown through the Illinois Risk and Reach Report. Licensed child care centers from each cluster would opt-in and select one or more teachers to participate. The early childhood educators from each cluster would receive training on trauma-informed care and implementation support (i.e. coaching). Research shows that coaching support improves teaching effective use of evidence-based practices.<sup>7</sup> There are organizations that currently provide trauma training, but few couple this training with developing the capacity of early childhood educators to be onsite coaches to their colleagues.

Funding for this pilot initiative could come from the Child Care and Development Block Grant Fund, which is the primary source of federal funding to improve the quality of child care programs. This pilot program would be coordinated through the Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development. An additional component of the pilot is the need for support and consultation for the coaches. After the first year of implementation, a future consideration adds coaching support to the early childhood educators serving in the roles of coaches. This could take the form of mental health consultation, reflective supervision and professional learning collaboratives.

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<sup>7</sup> Knight, 2009; Kretlow & Bartholomew, 2010; Neufeld & Roper, 2003; Snyder et al., 2015

It is critical that early childhood educators understand the adverse impact of trauma exposure on child development, the specific strategies that they can use to foster resilience and deploy interventions to mitigate the impact of childhood adversity. This type of comprehensive trauma training must not happen in isolation but also pair with professional development for implementation support. Once trained, participating cohorts will be given access to mental health consultation, reflective supervision and professional learning collaboratives. This provides opportunities for them to learn from peers in each cohort, as well as share strategies and best practices from cohorts in other regions. Providing the early care and education workforce access to support beyond one a surface-level workshop on trauma will increase the likelihood that new knowledge and skills will translate into sustained trauma-informed teaching practices.

## **OUTCOME**

ACEs are the most preventable cause of serious mental illness and are a significant contributor to leading causes of death (heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and suicide). High-quality early interventions, with early care and education programs being a core component, lowers the impacts of ACEs. Early childhood educators play a critical role in building resilience and protective factors in children and helping to ameliorate the negative effects that ACEs can have across the life span.

The significant benefits to a trauma-informed early childhood workforce extend to all children as the skills acquired to mitigate trauma are ultimately life skills. Trauma-informed teachers can enhance the children's ability to develop positive peer relationships, improve classroom management and teacher-child relationships. These are the critical skills that all children need to thrive in the classroom and succeed in life.

Long-term implementation of trauma-informed strategies would yield positive shifts in the educational outcomes of children exposed to trauma. Providing early childhood educators with trauma-informed training and coaching training, elevates the profession in such a way that they might be able to change the life course of children exposed to early adversity. This workforce will have the attitudes, knowledge and skills needed to create psychological and physical safety and teach emotion regulation as well as relationship development skills to children exposed to trauma.

## PROBLEM

Nationwide, almost 35 million children have been exposed to one or more types of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which can lead to trauma and chronic health problems. Specifically, 60 percent of children exposed to domestic violence are infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.<sup>1</sup> It is this population of children who need direct support not only from teachers, but also indirect support from school administrators. Currently, administrators are not trained to focus on early childhood development nor early childhood trauma as part of certification or credential requirements. Furthermore, they are also not trained to identify and/or trace those traumatic events back to their roots in oppression and/or inequality.

Understanding the importance of early childhood development in relation to ACEs will help administrators become aware of the significance of trauma and its impact on a child's school experience. Administrators must be able to identify the difference between typical early childhood behavior and behavior that is a result of trauma.

There is a direct correlation between the higher a child's ACE score and the likelihood they will suffer adult chronic illness. A child recording four or more ACEs is 240 percent more likely to develop hepatitis, 460 percent more likely to experience depression and 1,220 percent more likely to attempt to commit suicide.<sup>2</sup>

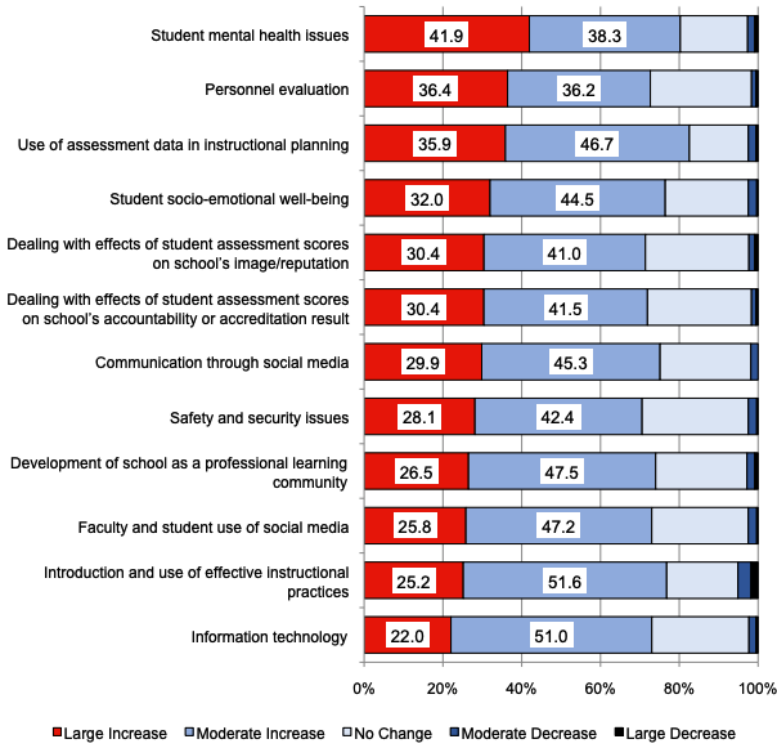
According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), a top-ranked concern for responding principals in 2018 was the increased demand for supporting the social-emotional needs of students. Data reflected that 42 percent of elementary school principals noted a significant increase in dedicating resources for student mental health needs and 32 percent noticed an increase in their involvement to facilitate student social-emotional well-being.

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<sup>1</sup> Associations, The National Council State Education. 2019. "Addressing the Epidemic of Trauma in Schools."

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D., Teresa Gil. 2019. "Adverse Childhood Experiences: Trauma and adult health consequences." *Psychology Today*.

## Areas of greatest growth in level of involvement



Source: *The Pre-K-8 School Leader in 2018*, p. 33. National Association of Elementary School Principals.

Nearly 60 percent of U.S children who have experienced ACEs live in households with incomes less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.<sup>3</sup> Preschool funding requires programs to prioritize students from communities with limited economic resources to promote greater access to quality preschool supports. Where children live, play, and learn may determine their likelihood to experience more adverse child and family experiences. Given these statistics, it is important to ensure early childhood development and trauma responsiveness training is included in administrators' knowledge base. This is especially relevant given that, nationally and in Illinois, school systems are beginning to prioritize early learning and integrate preschool into district systems and structures. While Chicago has expanded the number of preschool classrooms primarily in communities with limited access to high-quality early learning; investments in

<sup>3</sup> Crouch, Elizabeth. 2019. "Exploring the association between parenting stress and a child's exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)." *Children and Youth Services Review*, July: 186-192.

administrator trainings focused on early childhood and trauma supports are limited.

## CAUSE

Legislative and regulatory initiatives are just beginning to gain momentum at the state and federal levels. Conversations elevating the awareness of early childhood trauma and promising approaches to prevent, recognize, and address trauma appropriately have only recently begun to take shape with the 21st Century Cares Act in 2016 at the federal level and the Preschool Expulsion bill signed into law in Illinois in 2017. Recently, greater connections have been made between traumatic events rooted social forces of oppression and inequality and the impact on child development as advanced by the American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>4</sup> and the Harvard Center for the Developing Child.<sup>5</sup>

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that states create accountability and school improvement systems to measure and monitor achievement and growth from third grade through 12th grade. Accountability measures do not include indicators for preschool through second grade. Furthermore, in most states, including Illinois, preschool and kindergarten programs are not compulsory. The exclusion of early childhood education in school quality rating metrics diverts school leadership attention to the areas that will ultimately be measured. Omitting the early years from school-wide metrics does not incentivize nor reward administrators supporting early childhood development as a driver for positive academic outcomes, nor as a driver for whole-school success.

The relationship between K-12 and early learning programs lack coordination and structures for educators to model and replicate an inclusive birth-through-12th grade education model. The lack of alignment undermines transitions and the ability to identify quality measures for preschool-through-second grade to ensure instructional alignment. Through Chicago's Universal Preschool (UPK) expansion, there is an opportunity to prioritize early learning as a foundational part of a school district's educational mission rather than a separate program disconnected from the kindergarten-through-third grade experience. Children's first learning experiences set the tone for the rest of their lives, in school and

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<sup>4</sup> <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/144/2/e20191765>

<sup>5</sup> <https://medium.com/@ginwright/the-future-of-healing-shifting-from-trauma-informed-care-to-healing-centered-engagement-634f557ce69c>



beyond. The UPK initiative can promote greater alignment in assessments and instructional support for children and teachers.

## **SOLUTION**

While there are many pathways to establish and ensure administrators understand early childhood trauma and child development, one option is building the awareness of school and district leadership through training and professional development. This can be accomplished by revising administrator annual professional learning requirements to include a minimal dosage a multi-day statewide training on evidence-based, trauma-informed practices through the Administrators Academy or identified college or university partner. School administrators would learn how to define and address childhood trauma while creating environments where students feel safe, supported and ready to succeed, both socially and academically.

School and district administrators could expand their effectiveness by building their capacity to recognize and support young children facing trauma using a compassionate and research-informed response to allow them to support and expand children's resilience. One example is the Healing-Centered Engagement (HCE) approach advanced by Dr. Shawn Ginwright to transform trauma by examining how trauma is viewed, its societal causes, and how to intervene.<sup>6</sup> Preparing schools to support the whole child can also help mitigate the risk that children will be re-traumatized at school, which is a critical step in prevention since children impacted by trauma are more likely than their peers to experience additional trauma.<sup>7</sup>

A healing-centered approach views trauma not simply as an individual isolated experience, but rather highlights the ways in which trauma and healing are experienced collectively. The healing-centered approach comes from the idea that harm does not occur in isolation, but rather well-being comes from participating in transforming the root causes and external factors of the harm. This approach requires school leaders to first explore their bias and experiences as it relates to trauma.

Trauma-informed care is a more common topic in the field of early childhood. The overwhelming stress caused by trauma inflicts the most damage on the

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<sup>6</sup> Ginwright, Shawn. 2018. "The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement." (Medium).

<sup>7</sup> McInerney, Maura. n.d. "Unlocking the Door to Learning: Trauma-Informed Classrooms & Transformational Schools." *Education Law Center* 1-24.

developing brains and bodies of the youngest children, and trauma sensitivity training is an especially critical area of focus for early childhood leaders.

In addition, establishing a preschool-through-second grade culture and continuum within schools will provide a continuity of early care and education. It will also support administrators to avoid developmentally inappropriate practices and misidentification of special education services. By focusing on building partnerships and connections between schools and early learning care providers to facilitate referrals and service for children and families requiring support, a continuity of care is better facilitated. In addition, looking at learning across early childhood grade bands allows for cross training staff and building in opportunity for vertical planning within the school day.

## **OUTCOME**

More robust professional learning opportunities for administrators will foster a deeper understanding and developmentally appropriate responses to trauma. The early childhood focused Administrator Academy will make the way for additional supports for administrators to identify trauma in early childhood, and to mitigate harmful effects and impact on learning throughout the life course. Leadership matters and school administrators are the catalyst for change inside school buildings. Providing resources and support to fill in the learning gap will set the stage for improved child outcomes.

### PROBLEM

The field of early childhood education offers little opportunity for organizations to empower educators to advance their careers while enhancing program quality.

Over the last several years, there has been a focus on understanding the barriers and challenges that impact the early childhood workforce in Illinois, with specific attention to professionalizing the field by advocating for the Bachelor's (BA) degree. Creative solutions to BA attainment have been proposed, but the conversation has mostly been positioned for higher education to address; connecting the issue to the larger system-wide problem around defining quality and effective monitoring processes is lacking.

Currently, several disparate agencies are responsible for monitoring quality standards, many of which are further fragmented by funding streams.<sup>1</sup> They use metrics attached to basic, structural elements of quality (e.g. classroom ratios); misuse the purpose of assessment tools (e.g. establishing “cut scores” using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System); undermine educators as professionals; and do not positively affect outcomes for children and families. Ultimately, they are the wrong drivers for “whole system reform” and therefore will not achieve better measurable results.<sup>2</sup>

This compliance-based system disproportionately affects educators of color working in publicly funded programs. Fourteen percent of the total early care and education (ECE) workforce are Black (in Head Start 28 percent of educators are Black) and 17 percent are Latinx (in Head Start 21 percent are Latinx).<sup>3</sup> Additionally, on average, Black and Latinx women earn 84 cents for every one dollar earned by their white counterparts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Main, C., Yarbrough, K.W. and Patten, B. (2018). “Voices from the Front Lines of Early Learning: 2017 Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Survey Report.” Chicago, IL: UIC College of Education.

<sup>2</sup> Fullan, M. (2011). “Choosing the wrong drivers for whole system reform.” East Melbourne, Victoria: Centre for Strategic Education.

<sup>3</sup> Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018. Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

<sup>4</sup> Increasing Qualifications, Centering Equity.

## CAUSE

Understanding the difference between a compliance-driven professional system and a quality-driven professional system is nuanced. The two key indicators are:

1. Whether or not professional learning across the profession is aligned to competency development and professional standards (a system-enhancing quality) or regulatory requirements (a system-monitoring compliance); and
2. The focus and attention to measurable outcomes (quality) versus output metrics (compliance).<sup>5</sup>

The early childhood program setting, a compliance-driven system, ignores the science of child development and adult learning and has exacerbated the exploitation of labor, particularly the labor of women of color. The workforce is disempowered, therefore, incentivizing early exit. The result is a teacher turnover rate of 42 percent in community-based programs across the State of Illinois.<sup>6</sup> Teacher turnover fundamentally disrupts the caregiver/child relationship that is critical to a child's positive development.<sup>7</sup> There is much at stake, and many strategies to focus on, which is why whole-system reform is needed to address the compounded issue of program quality and workforce equity.

## SOLUTION

Early childhood practitioners and policymakers across state systems are seeking answers and vetting solutions, including those in the Illinois ECE system. Various advocates and experts across the field are working to move forward several key initiatives, including:

1. BA/MAT/PEL<sup>8</sup> ECE attainment for current ECE educators; and
2. Changes to the Illinois Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), known as ExceleRate Illinois, which aims to introduce continuous

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<sup>5</sup> Fullan, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Main, Yarbrough. Voices, 18.

<sup>7</sup> Main, C., Yarbrough, K.W. (2018). "Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce: A Call to Action for the state of Illinois." Chicago, IL: UIC College of Education.

<sup>8</sup> BA refers to a bachelor's degree, MAT refers to a master's degree, and PEL stands for Professional Educator License

improvement practices linked to program quality and child and family outcomes<sup>9</sup>

On March 9, 2020, the ECE Power to the Profession national task force released its unifying framework. In it, they highlighted the necessity “for professional preparation programs, including institutes of higher education, to work with state systems and others to eliminate systemic barriers, encourage innovation and new models and pathways that maintain the commitment to quality... Professional preparation programs are also encouraged to collaborate with professional organizations to support specializations.” The role of employers is also outlined, namely, “professional development and related supports.”

ECE employers/providers are also working to implement partnerships with professional preparation programs to enhance program quality while empowering educators. Two such examples are Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) and the YMCA. LSNA has a history of grow-your-own teacher education programs for K-12 and expanded its program for early childhood. The agency partnered with Truman College and recruited assistant teachers and paraprofessionals looking to move to lead teacher roles.<sup>10</sup>

During the 2019-2020 academic year, Catherine Main, senior lecturer at University of Illinois at Chicago collaborated with the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago to design a course based on the existing professional learning system at the YMCA. The course provided educators with credits toward their BA or MAT for professional learning they were already completing within the YMCA. While this work had an impact on the YMCA as an organization, the lessons learned were not able to be disseminated across the broader ECE field.

Heavy emphasis has been placed on cohort-model initiatives that create innovative pathways for ECE educators at various levels (paraprofessional, assistant teacher, lead teacher in need of licensure). Yet, these initiatives are often presented in a bifurcated way to frontline site-leaders and staff. This leaves educators with two options: participate in many opportunities and risk burn-out from participation in professional development requirements, BA/PEL attainment, and engagement in site program-wide continuous improvement efforts, or limit engagement and risk minimizing the value-add. Consistent alignment between these strategies (i.e. increasing the “pipeline” and the

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<sup>9</sup> Gateways to Opportunities, the professional development system, is the counterpart to ExceleRate and offers professional development, resources, and scholarship opportunities for degree attainment.

<sup>10</sup> Zinnser, K.M., Main, C., et al. “Patching the Pathway and Widening the Pipeline: Models for Developing a Diverse Early Childhood Workforce in Chicago,” *American Journal of Community Psychology*, (2019) 63: 459-471.

“pathways”), ExceleRate-endorsed continuous improvement practices, and the intrinsic motivation of educators will maximize whole-system impact.

**Recommendation:** Currently, a set of early childhood workforce recommendations have outlined a plan to integrate these initiatives. In order to maximize these recommendations, a pilot phase with community-based organizational buy-in is suggested with two modifications to the recommendations:

- Expand in-service/professional development to include ExceleRate continuous improvement practices; and
- Incentive and support community collaborations focused on measurably boosting kindergarten readiness within an existing professional learning system aimed at supporting educators and increasing quality practice comprehensively.

### Action Steps:

1. **Focus on capacity building.**  
Design a pilot BA/PEL endorsement program that integrates traditional course credit work with newly suggested ExceleRate continuous improvement metrics.
2. **Target competencies.**  
Honor educators experiences, particularly educators of color.
3. **Center educators, practitioners, and provider leaders as co-designers of their own education.**  
Engage Early Head Start/Head Start program leaders of color, and the educators of color who work in those programs, in the design process alongside Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and institutes of higher education.
4. **Promote equity.**  
Recruit assistant teachers who identify as women of color for participation in the program; identify and ensure existing site-team members act as field instructors and engaged in the process.
5. **Pilot-test the model.**

#### Timeline:

- Years 1-2: Co-design program based on learnings from existing initiatives and engagement with providers and educators.
- Year 2: Target organizations and educators for participation.
- Years 3-5: Pilot-test the model, examine findings.

#### **OUTCOME**

Quality instructional practice, school/program culture and climate, and an educated, diverse workforce are the drivers of ECE program quality and positive child outcomes. Integrating the workforce “pipeline” with workforce “pathways,” and intentionally linking them to the principles of program quality improvement will reduce cumbersome, ineffective professional development, increase program quality, and benefit workforce development initiatives that advance equity. The research is clear: holistic, systemic investment in teachers results in lifelong positive outcomes for children.

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# The 2019-2020 Barbara Bowman Leadership Fellows



## Mark Barrett

Director, Early Learning Quality Improvement  
Illinois Action for Children

Mark Barrett serves as the director of early learning quality improvement for Illinois Action for Children (IAFC). He oversees the early learning programs, providing leadership, operational direction, training/technical assistance, staff management, grant writing, and fiscal management. He successfully led IAFC through its first monitoring review by the Department of Health & Human Services and was instrumental in helping the program earn a Silver designation in the ExceleRate Circles of Quality. He previously served as IAFC's director of compliance and outreach for the Family Resources Department.

Prior to IAFC, Barrett was the director of child development programs at Ada. S. McKinley Community Service. He also worked as a manager with CEDA, overseeing the operations of the mental health and disabilities programs and a clinical social worker for a Head Start program in Miami, Florida. He has 25 years of experience working with children and families and holds a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in social work.





## John Christopher Borrero

Executive Director

Collaboration for Early Childhood

John Borrero is the executive director of the Collaboration for Early Childhood. The Collaboration strengthens the capacity of community systems to support families and children on their journey to kindergarten. He was manager of child care and education initiatives at the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness at the American Academy of Pediatrics. He held several national and regional leadership positions, including those with the Office of Head Start's National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness, the National Head Start Family Literacy Center, and the Head Start Regional Training and Technical Assistance team for Region II (New York).

Borrero served as a trainer in teacher development for the Child Development Associate (CDA) credentialing program and as adjunct faculty in early childhood, most recently at New York University's School of Continuing and Professional Studies, and at Bank Street College of Education. He received a bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University and a master's degree in education from Boston College.



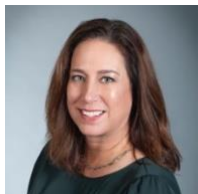
## Shelley Bromberek-Lambert

Chief Re-imagination Officer

YWCA Metropolitan Chicago

Shelley Bromberek-Lambert is chief re-imagination officer for the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago. She has spent over 30 years in the field of education, helping organizations solve complex problems by creating and implementing practical, effective strategies and processes that leverage their number one asset – their people. Prior to joining the YWCA, she was the chief operating officer for Knowledge Universe, overseeing operations across the United States and in India.

She is an active member of the National Afterschool Association and served as the chairman of their board of directors. She is also involved at the local level as a member of the DuPage Federations Council of Leaders. She also sits on the corporate boards for Reflections Sciences and Right at School. She received a bachelor's degree in public administration from Northern Illinois University.

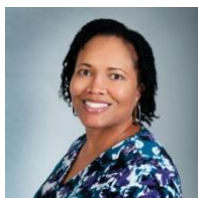


## Stephanie Bynum

Vice President of Programs  
Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago

As the vice president of programs at Kohl Children's Museum of Greater Chicago, Stephanie Bynum oversees the Exhibits, Education and Visitor Experience departments—engaging in key projects including the creation of a teachers' resource website, implementing The Project Approach, designing developmentally appropriate hands-on technology programming, and creating a pop-up museum program to serve the Waukegan, North Chicago and Round Lake communities in Illinois.

She has over 25 years of experience in early childhood teaching, program administration and adult education. She was the assistant dean of academic affairs at Erikson Institute and also taught at the College of Lake County and Kendall College. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education with pre-k through 3rd grade teacher certification from the University of Wisconsin-Stout and a master's degree in child development from Erikson Institute.



## Melissa Casteel

Director of Assessment, City of Chicago  
McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at  
National Louis University (NLU)

Melissa Casteel is director of quality assessment for the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at NLU, managing the City of Chicago contracts. Previously, she served as a national reliability anchor for the Program Administration Scale and the Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care. She was state anchor for the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale and the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale, and an Affiliate CLASS™ Trainer. She was a kindergarten teacher, adjunct faculty, and director of an accredited early childhood program and public-school Head Start program.

She has an Illinois Professional Educator License with general administrative and early childhood education endorsements and is pursuing a learning behavior specialist endorsement. She has a doctorate in adult and continuing education, graduate degrees in early childhood leadership, advocacy, and administration and supervision from NLU and a bachelor's in early childhood education from the University of Illinois.



## Sarah Collentine

Associate Director of Early Childhood  
Christopher House

Sarah Collentine is the associate director of early childhood at Christopher House. She has worked at Christopher House for over nine years, starting as a teacher and then as a site director before moving into her current role.

Collentine holds a master's degree in child development as well as an infant-toddler specialist certificate from Erikson Institute and a bachelor's degree in human development and family studies from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



## Kathleen Cox

Director of Early Childhood Education  
East Aurora District 131

Katie Cox is the director of early learning and educational grants for the East Aurora School District 131. She works closely with her team to provide equitable early learning experiences to nearly a thousand children from birth to age five. Her team prides itself on their motto, "work together, learn together," which recognizes the value of having those in the school community be both teachers and learners.

She began her career serving as a school counselor in a primary school in a collar community of Chicago for nine years before becoming an administrator. As a director, Cox champions the inclusion of all learners and works to create opportunities for families to connect to their child's school in a meaningful way. She has experience serving communities across the country, including focused work with immigrant families in rural Arizona.

Cox has received statewide recognition for her work in education. She holds a bachelor's degree in recreation and park administration, a master's degree in educational counseling, and a certificate of advanced study in educational leadership.



## Carmen Holley

Project Manager

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago Center for Childhood Resilience

As project manager for the Center for Childhood Resilience, Carmen Holley is involved in multiple projects, namely supporting the work of the School Mental Health Team, which provides on-site support and coaching to school and community partners. She is a Tier II training coordinator, organizing and facilitating trainings, and provides ongoing implementation support for school-based clinicians.

As a licensed clinical social worker, Holley has over 15 years of experience providing trauma-informed intervention and mental health supports to children and adolescents. Additionally, she has several years of experience delivering clinical and case management services to students in school and residential settings, facilitating group interventions, and partnering with school leaders, staff and community members. Holley received a bachelor's degree in psychology from Xavier University of Louisiana and a master's degree in social service administration from the University of Chicago.



## Peter Leonard

Director of Student Assessment

Chicago Public Schools

Peter Leonard is the director of student assessment at Chicago Public Schools (CPS), ensuring that all Chicago education stakeholders have accurate information about how well students are learning in CPS schools. His responsibilities include the management of policy, strategy, and implementation of national, state, and district assessments.

Leonard contributed to state-level work through the State Assessment Review Committee and the P-20 Council's Committee on Data, Assessment and Accountability. He is a board member and mentor for Horizons for Youth, a nonprofit that provides educational support services to students on Chicago's south and west sides. He is an alum of the Education Pioneers and University of Chicago Civic Leadership Academy fellowships. He holds a bachelor's degree in history from the University of Notre Dame and a master's degree in learning sciences from Northwestern University.



## Diana McClarien

Director of Grantee Support Services  
The Ounce of Prevention Fund

Continuing her family's legacy of service and advocacy in education, Diana McClarien is the director of grantee support services for The Ounce of Prevention Fund (The Ounce). She oversees the Early Head Start and Head Start grant, which supports community partner programs serving children 0-5 years and pregnant women.

She joined The Ounce in 2010 as the education coordinator for Early Head Start and Head Start grantee support services. Under her leadership in 2012, The Ounce started the Healthy Parents & Babies Program, which provides services to children ages 0-3 and doula services to pregnant women. She began her career as a child advocate at the Migrant Head Start Program in Cobden, Illinois and has more than 20 years of experience in early childhood serving as a child advocate specialist, Head Start teacher, home visitor, education coordinator, site director, program manager, and Head Start grantee director.

She holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education from Southern Illinois University and a master's degree in teaching, learning and assessment from National Louis University.

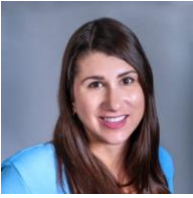


## Leslie McKinily

Director, Program Operations  
Chicago Public Schools

Leslie McKinily is the director of program operations for the Office of Early Childhood at Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Prior to serving in this role, she was responsible for overseeing the Head Start program for the district. In addition, she has over 22 years working in various roles within early childhood education.

She is a UCLA Head Start Fellow and earned a bachelor's degree from Delaware State University and a master's degree from National Louis University. She is currently enrolled in a doctoral program focusing on educational leadership.



## Ashley Nazarak

Vice President, Learning and Evaluation  
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago

Ashley Nazarak is the vice president of learning and evaluation with the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago. She is tasked with cultivating high-quality, evidence-based programming and elevating the quality of programming across the YMCA by combining evidence-based best practices with an innovative approach to youth-centered learning.

In addition, she leads the implementation of the Early Learning YQ Initiative, which is a feature of the YMCA's anti-bias literacy approach that combines language and literacy best practices with anti-bias education principles and practices. She holds a bachelor's degree in child development from the University of Kansas, School of Applied Behavioral Sciences and a master's degree in social work from the University of Chicago, School of Social Service Administration.



## Noel Norris

Associate Director of Early Childhood Programs  
Kids Above All

Noel Norris is currently serving as associate director of early childhood programs at Kids Above All (formerly ChildServ). Her responsibilities include providing support to home visitors who plan and implement home-based activities for families with limited economic resources, building and maintaining collaborative relationships with other community agencies serving families, and evaluating program fidelity to meet the needs of stakeholders.

She worked for Kids Above All for five years as an Early Childhood Home-Visiting Supervisor prior to her current role. Norris has previous experience teaching infants, primary and intermediate students, and has held various leadership roles in State Pre-K programs in Tennessee and Georgia.

Noel received her bachelor's degree in mass communications from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and her master's degree in early childhood leadership and advocacy from National Louis University.



## Kimberly Nelson

Executive Director of Early Childhood  
Rockford Public School District

Kimberly Nelson is the executive director of early childhood for Rockford Public Schools. With years in early intervention, special education, and early childhood, she is committed to providing access and excellence in education through instructional leadership, community collaborations, advocacy, resource development, and professional learning.

Nelson serves on the REL Midwest Governing Board and is a member of the Midwest Early Childhood Education Research Alliance. She co-chairs the Illinois Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Committee and the Alignment Rockford Healthy Starts Team. A graduate of Northern Illinois University and St. Xavier University, she has a bachelor's degree in education with endorsements and approvals in early childhood, elementary, and special education, and a master's degrees in educational leadership and education and teacher leadership.



## Nina Smith

Executive Director  
LEAP

Nina Smith is the executive director for LEAP. During her tenure, she has been instrumental in building the organization's suite of evidence-based curricula, programming, and learning tools for speech-language development. In addition to her efforts delivering the Language for Scholars curriculum in schools and community organizations across Chicago, she constructed and disseminated LEAP's nationally recognized Beginning with Babble app. Under her leadership, she guided the organization to victory in the Social Venture Partners Chicago Fast Pitch Competition for social entrepreneurs in 2018.

Prior to her leadership role, she served as program staff for LEAP and worked as a speech-language pathologist in the Chicago Public Schools, forging close relationships with the parents, students and teachers at several schools. Smith is an alumnus of the Surge Institute Fellowship program for emerging educators of color. She holds a bachelor's degree in communication sciences and disorders, and master's degrees in speech-language pathology and learning disabilities from Northwestern University.

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# Lead Coaches

**Barbara Buell**

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Director, Legislative Affairs

Ounce of Prevention Fund

**Dan Harris**

Executive Director

Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA)

**Bob Spatz**

Former Board Member

Oak Park District 97

**Joyce Weiner**

Former Policy Manager

Ounce of Prevention Fund

**Karen Yarbrough**

Consultant

Early Care and Education Policy & Programs



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Erikson Institute

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Erikson Institute

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Director of Child Life  
Erikson Institute

**Representative Elizabeth  
Hernandez**

Illinois State House of  
Representatives, 24th District

**Wannetta Kinsey**

Manager of Child Care Assistance  
Program Support Services  
Illinois Action for Children

**Dan Kotowski**

President and CEO  
Kids Above All

**Senator Kimberly Lightford**

Senate Majority Leader  
Illinois State Senate, 4th District

**Dr. Luisiana Meléndez**

Professor  
Erikson Institute

**Dr. Geoffrey Nagle**

President and CEO  
Erikson Institute

**Patty Oji, MPA, ACC, CPCC**

Co-Founder, Executive Coach &  
Consultant  
Alpha People & Project Solutions

**Marianne Pokorny**

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YWCA Metropolitan Chicago

**Elliot Regenstein**

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Foresight Law + Policy

**Samir Tanna**

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**Debra Vines**

Founder and CEO  
The Answer Inc.

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