

# Erikson Institute

Early Childhood Leadership Academy

Barbara  
Bowman  
Leadership  
Fellows

Cohort

2017

The Early Childhood Leadership Academy is pleased to present the policy memos developed by the 2017 Cohort of the Barbara Bowman Leadership Fellows Program.

Policy  
Memos



# SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BARBARA 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 this program aims to attract. Furthermore, her dedication to ensuring that diversity and equity are mutually reinforced provides the framework that supports the entire program experience.

## Erikson Institute

This effort draws from Erikson's mission-driven work to ensure a future in which all children have equitable opportunities to realize their full potential through leadership and policy influence. Special thanks to President and CEO, Geoffrey A. Nagle for his continuous commitment to the program.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Participating Organizations



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# ACCESS

**CARISA HURLEY**

**One Hope United**

## PROBLEM

The Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) is an observation assessment that provides a comprehensive picture of a child's whole development. Illinois adopted the KIDS as a tool to measure children's developmental readiness in kindergarten given that it is a determinant for long-term educational success.<sup>1</sup> The KIDS is essential to the Illinois State Board of Education's (ISBE) goal that states every child in Illinois deserves to attend a school where all kindergarteners are assessed for readiness. However, the impact of the state's investment in the KIDS could potentially be limited because kindergarten enrollment is not mandatory in Illinois. As of school year 2014-2015, the statutory age for mandated school entry is six years old.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, children who do not attend kindergarten may not be fully assessed for academic readiness and achievement until third grade or two years after mandated school entry. Third grade is high stakes since it is the first grade-level benchmark in school accountability. Furthermore, if performance is anything short of "meeting expectations," improvement may be a longer road to travel since the sensitive period for development has just closed.<sup>3</sup>

The consequence of optional kindergarten enrollment results in a lack of records chronicling children's developmental progress for teachers to identify any support needed for their ability to meet third grade reading levels. Furthermore, kindergarten is a core educational milestone that lays the foundation for a child's educational future. Children who do not attend any formalized schooling until first grade are set up for failure because they are expected to perform on the same level as children who attended kindergarten.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.isbe.net/kids](http://www.isbe.net/kids)

<sup>2</sup> [www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs4.asp?DocName=010500050HArt%2E+26&ActID=1005&ChapterID=17&SeqStart=159200000&SeqEnd=161800000](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs4.asp?DocName=010500050HArt%2E+26&ActID=1005&ChapterID=17&SeqStart=159200000&SeqEnd=161800000)

<sup>3</sup> Lauren Goyette, Illinois Should Mandate Enrollment In Kindergarten

Research shows that children with poor reading levels in first grade rarely catch up and continue to be struggling readers.<sup>4</sup>

## CAUSE

Illinois has taken steps to support birth to third grade alignment,<sup>5</sup> yet there is a breakdown in policy because of kindergarten optional enrollment. The lack of integration between the early childhood and K-12 systems results in conflicting messages for families and school districts. For example, Illinois children are not required by law to enroll in kindergarten, yet school districts are required to minimally offer half-day kindergarten programs. Furthermore, publically-funded preschool programs are expected to embed school readiness into their curriculum and structure. As a result, there is a lack of continuity in the state's birth to third grade investment.

There are few school districts with mechanisms and resources to identify early reading problems, and successful remediation is more difficult and costly at third grade. The KIDS assessment flags early concerns and, if kindergarten enrollment was mandatory, the KIDS would meet its full potential by ensuring all children were assessed for readiness. Schools can develop intervention plans earlier and offer supports instead of expending more resources on remediation for students at third grade.

Poor reading skills have a domino effect on later learning. Struggling readers rarely catch up and are four times more likely to drop out of high school. Furthermore, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reported in 2010 that "every student who does not complete high school costs our society an estimated \$260,000 in lost earnings, taxes, and productivity."<sup>6</sup>

## SOLUTION

The compulsory age for school entry should be lowered to five years old before September 1 to ensure kindergarten participation. Lowering the compulsory age will support the public investment in birth to third grade alignment and enhance the state goal of every child deserving to attend a school where all kindergarteners are assessed for readiness by ensuring that all children are assessed prior to entering first grade. Furthermore, mandating kindergarten can contribute to more children receiving early support and instruction to

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<sup>4</sup> Kristie Kauerz, PreK-3rd: Putting Full-Day Kindergarten in the Middle, Foundation For Child Development Policy to Action Brief, 5 (June 2010)

<sup>5</sup> Center for the Study of Education Policy, Illinois State University, Birth-to Third Grade Pipeline. [education.illinoisstate.edu/csep/b3/](http://education.illinoisstate.edu/csep/b3/)

<sup>6</sup> [files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509795.pdf](http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED509795.pdf)

strengthen literacy and reading skills, thus potentially narrowing the achievement gap.

## OUTCOME

If adopted, the State of Illinois will be set up for supporting kindergarten readiness and genuine birth to third grade alignment in the educational system without a possible breakdown at kindergarten due to children not attending. A kindergarten entry assessment of children's strengths and areas for growth utilizing the KIDS would apply to all children and level their chances of success in reaching third-grade educational expectations.



## PROBLEM

High-quality child care is unaffordable for most families in Illinois, including those firmly in the middle-class. While families with limited economic resources qualify for a subsidy through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) to offset the cost of child care, families earning over 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (i.e. family size of two with maximum annual salary of \$16,460) cannot access subsidies for federally- and state-funded child care programs.<sup>1</sup> As a result, many families experience a financial burden that may compromise the quality of child care available for their family arrangements.

Families who are not eligible for CCAP are left to choose within limited child care options due to affordability. Some options force families to consider alternative employment scenarios such as reducing work hours or obtaining lower-paid or part-time positions to have more flexibility to care for their children. Without CCAP or regulated child care fees, a single parent earning an hourly wage of \$10 would find few regulated child care options that cost less than 40 to 53 percent of a family's net income. Additionally, limited options not only compromise a family's ability to provide essential early childhood education, but also diminish the likelihood of continuity of care that has been correlated with positive cognitive development resulting in academic achievement and strong economic returns.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, without statutory protections preserving CCAP eligibility, access for families can be limited even further. For example, on July 1, 2015, an emergency administrative rule change enacted by Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner strictly limited the eligibility of new participants in CCAP. As a result, only 10 percent of otherwise eligible applicants were approved for assistance. In just seven months, the number of Cook County families participating in CCAP

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<sup>1</sup> [www.federalregister.gov/d/2018-00814](http://www.federalregister.gov/d/2018-00814)

<sup>2</sup> [www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/NPT-Continuity-of-Care-Nov-2015.pdf](http://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/NPT-Continuity-of-Care-Nov-2015.pdf)

decreased by almost 20,000, or by 41 percent and the number of children in CCAP-paid care decreased by about 32,000.<sup>3</sup>

## CAUSE

The true cost of high-quality child care is expensive and wages for working families are not sufficient. On average, infant care in a licensed center in Cook County costs \$13,560 annually, or about 20 percent of a typical family's (two parents, one child under 18) income.<sup>4</sup> For example, a family of two making over \$30,048 annually would not qualify for CCAP and cannot afford tuition without support thus requiring the family to obtain child care through other means to maintain regular employment.

Child care is particularly unaffordable for minimum-wage workers. The high cost of child care means that a full-time, full-year minimum-wage worker with one child falls far below the family budget threshold in all 618 family budget areas—even after adjusting for higher state and city minimum wages.

Among families with young children, child care costs constitute a large share of annual earnings for families living off one full-time, full-year minimum-wage income. For example, to meet the demands of infant care costs for a year, a minimum-wage worker in Hawaii—the state with the median state minimum wage (\$7.75)—would have to devote his or her entire earnings from working full time (40 hours a week) from January until September.

Annual wages total just \$15,080 for a full-time, full-year worker (i.e., one who works 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year) paid the federal minimum wage. Even after adjusting for higher state and city minimum wages, a full-time, full-year minimum-wage worker is paid less than is necessary for one adult to meet his local family budget threshold—and far below what is required for an adult with even just one child to make ends meet anywhere.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, child care fees or sliding scales fluctuate and are not regulated by law. Currently, child care centers formulate tuition fees based on center location, operating costs, and ownership profitability, which translates into a moving target for families in search of high-quality child care.

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<sup>3</sup> 2017 Report on Child Care in Cook County, [www.actforchildren.org](http://www.actforchildren.org).

<sup>4</sup> Fact Sheet: Cost of Child Care in Cook County 2017, [www.actforchildren.org](http://www.actforchildren.org).

<sup>5</sup> Cooke, T. & Gould, E. "High quality child care is out of reach for working families Report." Economic Policy Institute. [www.epi.org/publication/child-care-affordability/](http://www.epi.org/publication/child-care-affordability/). December 2017.

# SOLUTION

The family contribution to cover the cost of child care must be regulated and factor in the cost of living expenses in each state. It should be in alignment with the seven percent threshold established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as the standard for affordable child care outlined in the report, “Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2016.”

Additionally, include a gradual phase-in for families obtaining a wage increase above the 185 percent FPL up to 306 percent FPL with copayment amounts not to go above the seven percent threshold. The table below illustrates proposed family income eligibility guidelines:

FPL Guidelines\*

Family Size	Annual FPL	100% Monthly FPL	156% Monthly FPL	191% Monthly FPL	200% Monthly FPL	306% Monthly FPL
1	12,140	1,012	1,578	1,932	2,023	3,096
2	16,460	1,372	2,140	2,620	2,743	4,197
3	20,780	1,732	2,701	3,307	3,463	5,299
4	25,100	2,092	3,263	3,995	4,183	6,401
5	29,420	2,452	3,825	4,683	4,903	7,502
6	33,740	2,812	4,386	5,370	5,623	8,604
7	38,060	3,172	4,948	6,058	6,343	9,705
8	42,380	3,532	5,509	6,745	7,063	10,807
Each Additional Person	4320	360.00	561.60	687.60	720.00	1,101.60

\*These guidelines apply to the 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia.

Furthermore, a 12-month eligibility period for families qualifying for Head Start and CCAP can provide continuous quality care for children over a more reasonable period of time versus current redetermination periods that only cover three or six months at a time.

# OUTCOME

If adopted, the aforementioned recommendations will allow working families access to affordable, high-quality, full-day early care and education based on expanded eligibility and streamlined processing. As a result, families will also gain financial stability that contributes to better child outcomes. Children will have experiences in the early years to gain positive cognitive and academic development and achievement leading to better economic return in the future.

**FELICIA STARKS TURNER**  
**Oak Park Elementary School District 97**

**PROBLEM**

Many American families are caught in a child care dilemma. Parents cannot afford child care; however, they need it to be able to earn a living. This dilemma may cause parents to leave the workforce, cut back on work hours, or piece together child care providers, which often include other family members. This can cause economic and emotional stress for families.

This problem is exacerbated by barriers to accessing high-quality, full-day preschool programs. Barriers include limited availability of programs and space, access to transportation, affordable tuition, and program hours that support working parents. Full-day preschool programs have waiting lists that cannot be filled. In some cases, parents chose not to enroll in half-day programs because of the logistics associated with piecing together a full day of care. As a result, not all children enter kindergarten eager to learn and ready to succeed.

Lack of access can adversely impact kindergarten readiness for those who do not attend a full-day, high-quality preschool thus creating the potential for academic disadvantage compared to their peers who attended a high-quality preschool. Children need to be stimulated every day in ways to support their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Developmentally-appropriate engagement offered on a consistent basis builds a healthy foundation of neural pathways in children’s brains. These brain connections impact a child’s ability to think, react, process and grow throughout life. Actively supporting child development results in children who are:

<b>Prepared for School</b>	<b>Prepared for Life</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Achieve basic milestones in intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development</li><li>• Act curious and ready to learn</li><li>• Interact well with other children and caregivers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Higher college attendance and graduation rates</li><li>• Greater job stability and earning potential and lower incidence of poverty</li><li>• Healthier living, both physically and mentally</li><li>• Less likely to engage in criminal behavior</li></ul>

The benefits from participation in a high-quality preschool are especially great for children with limited economic resources because they are less likely to be prepared for kindergarten in areas such as early verbal and math skills as well as social-emotional development. They are more likely to have health problems that may impede learning. However, they experience the most significant cognitive and social-emotional gains from participation in a high-quality preschool.<sup>1</sup>

The disparities in early childhood lead to an opportunity gap. According to the Schott Foundation for Public Education, the opportunity gap is the greatest crisis facing America's schools. It is defined by the disparity in access to quality schools and the resources needed for all children to be academically successful. The Schott Foundation's Opportunity to Learn Index found that students from historically disadvantaged families have just a 51 percent opportunity to learn compared to White, non-Latino students.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, there are strong correlations with academic achievement when America's students are grouped by race.<sup>3</sup> High school achievement shows the most glaring racial disparities:

- While one out of 12 White students can competently read from a specialized text (such as the science section of the newspaper), only one out of 50 Latino students and one out of 100 African American students are able to gain information from a specialized text.
- One in 30 Latino students and one in 100 African American students can complete multi-step, elementary-algebra problems that one out of 10 White students can complete comfortably.
- Three out of 10 African American students and four of 10 Latino students have mastered usage and computation of fractions, percentages, and averages. Meanwhile, seven of 10 White students have mastered these same skills.

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<sup>1</sup>"The Economics of Inequality: The Value of Early Childhood Education," *American Educator* (Spring 2011)

<sup>2</sup>schottfoundation.org – Opportunity Gap Talking Points (January 19, 2018)

<sup>3</sup>*Race, Class, and the Achievement Gap: The Promise of Student Potential*

<sup>4</sup>*Voices for Illinois Children Policy Report: Disparities to Access to Preschool in Illinois - August 2014*

<sup>5</sup>Center on the Developing Child (2007). *The Science of Early Childhood Development* (InBrief). Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu).

## CAUSE

The rising cost of living necessitates two incomes for many working families, which increases the demand for full-day preschool. However, the limited supply of full-day preschool programs decreases access to full-day preschool and therefore contributes to the opening of an opportunity gap. The lack of full-day preschool programs can have a lasting impact by contributing to persistent disparities in child outcomes. The opportunity gap supports a system of oppression, which is evident in the strong correlation with academic achievement by race and ethnicity.

## SOLUTION

More high-quality, full-day and half-day preschool programs that offer before and after school care for children are needed in Illinois. Access to these programs should be prioritized for families that are living at 100 percent of federal poverty level and offer a sliding scale to parents based on their ability to pay.

To fill seats with prioritized populations, a strong referral program with coordinated intake among service providers would include doctor's offices; Women, Infants, and Children Food and Nutrition Service (WIC); early childhood programs, etc. An investment in high-quality, subsidized, full-day and full-year early childhood programs will help ensure that children have access to safe, stable, and high-quality learning experiences they will need to thrive and succeed in school and life.

## OUTCOME

The new status quo would be new early childhood programs that would allow access to a high-quality full day of preschool (7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.) to preschool-age students regardless of ability to pay and zip code. The new status quo will have a significant impact on kindergarten readiness because it will contribute to the elimination of the opportunity gap caused by the lack of access to high-quality preschool experiences.

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# SYSTEMS ALIGNMENT AND COORDINATION

TIFFANY DEROCCO

United Way of Kankakee & Iroquois Counties

## PROBLEM

Kankakee County implemented the Early Development Instrument (EDI) within five local school districts. The results reflected high levels of child vulnerability within the areas of social competence and emotional maturity. Specifically, the data revealed 30 percent of children community-wide are vulnerable in social competency, and 29 percent are vulnerable in emotional maturity.

Scientific studies indicate a strong correlation between childhood trauma and its impact on children's social and emotional development. From birth, children are rapidly developing the capacity to express, cope and manage a full range of emotions. The emotional health of young children is dependent upon the social and emotional characteristics of the environment in which they live. When a child experiences trauma of any type before he or she enters kindergarten, that child has a significant chance of becoming socially and emotionally vulnerable. It has been shown that trauma will shut down areas of the brain that would normally control impulses of the neocortex and unaddressed trauma leads to slower academic achievement and withdrawal from classroom participation, which ultimately creates an opportunity gap for children<sup>1</sup>.

The correlation between early traumatic experiences and emotional development and maturity has been shown to have a direct correlation to not only health,<sup>2</sup> but also the potential financial future of an individual. This can contribute to a cycle of intergenerational economic instability within a community. Therefore, if children who are vulnerable in social competence and emotional maturity do not receive appropriate interventions and support, it is likely they will experience future challenges in school, society, and life.<sup>3</sup> The impact is felt even more on a macro scale within the community; often

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce D. Perry. *Brain Science Behind Student Trauma*.

<sup>2</sup> Center for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente, *The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study*

<sup>3</sup> Harvard University. *Children's Emotional Development Is Built into the Architecture of Their Brains*.

individuals who experience trauma in the early years can face greater obstacles completing higher education and securing a path to financial stability.<sup>4</sup>

## CAUSE

As reported in the “Brain Science behind Student Trauma” by Bruce Perry, “Each year, nearly one-third of all children attending U.S .public schools will have significantly impaired cortical functioning due to abuse, neglect, domestic violence, poverty and other adversities.”<sup>5</sup> As a result, significant effects on children’s brain development impacts their ability to learn and communicate, interact with others, and to express emotions in appropriate ways.

Brain growth and development is considerably “front loaded,” meaning that, by age four, 90 percent of a child’s brain is adult size.<sup>6</sup> According to Harvard’s Center on the Developing Child, scientific evidence shows emotional development begins early in life and that it is a critical component to the overall brain architecture. In the first five years of life, the foundations of social competence are developed and linked to emotional well-being, which affects a child’s later ability in life to adapt in school and form successful relationships throughout life. As a child develops into adulthood, it is these same social skills that allow them to form lasting relationships, become effective parents, possess the ability to hold a job, and, overall, become a key contributing member of society.<sup>7</sup>

Lastly, when trauma is not addressed early in life, it can create patterns that are passed from generation to generation. In an article released in the *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice*, author Michelle M. Sotero states, “Maladaptive behaviors and related social problems such as substance abuse, physical/sexual abuse, and suicide directly traumatize offspring and are indirectly transmitted through learned behavior perpetuating the intergenerational cycle of trauma. Secondary and subsequent generations also experience ‘vicarious traumatization’ through the collective memory, storytelling and oral traditions of the population.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/108/7/2693.full.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Bruce D. Perry. *Brain Science Behind Student Trauma*.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce D. Perry. *Maltreatment and the Developing Child: How Early Childhood Experience Shapes Child and Culture*.

<sup>7</sup> Harvard University. *Children’s Emotional Development Is Built into the Architecture of Their Brains*.

<sup>8</sup> Sotero, Michelle, A Conceptual Model of Historical Trauma: Implications for Public Health Practice and Research (Fall 2006). *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 93-108, Fall 2006. Available at SSRN: [ssrn.com/abstract=1350062](http://ssrn.com/abstract=1350062)



## SOLUTION

A cross-sector approach is needed to address child trauma. Involvement would include school districts, early childhood providers, hospitals, mental health and social service agencies. If school districts can properly identify children who are potentially experiencing trauma at an early age, communities are better positioned to respond with a multidisciplinary treatment plan that can help improve long-term health and well-being.

School districts in Kankakee County should pilot a screening tool for all children no later than first grade.<sup>9</sup> Results from the screening tool can inform a plan collectively carried out by the multidisciplinary team convened by school districts to address the needs of identified children in support of their development and academic performance. Implementing a universal screening will also allow Kankakee County to better determine prevalence of child traumatic experiences and monitor the effectiveness of interventions or point to additional need.

In addition to the screening tool, Kankakee County school districts would designate a lead point of contact to oversee the identification and implementation of trauma-informed practices. This person would be trained to assist students through the screening and referral process as well as to support school districts through training and technical assistance on trauma and trauma-informed practices. This could include strategies such as train the trainer, Youth Mental Health First Aid,<sup>10</sup> and restorative justice practices. It is essential that the districts are trained on trauma so as not to re-traumatize or stigmatize children any further. Identifying a lead would allow school districts to better respond to the complex needs of their students.

## OUTCOME

Addressing trauma at an early age in our schools requires providing children with the resources they need to thrive. Children who receive the proper resources to address early childhood trauma have significantly increased success rates within the educational system. Their success in the educational system would further ensure our community's economic stability by preparing the future workforce. The future of our community starts with providing the best resources for our children today.

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<sup>9</sup> Early administration of developmental screening is ideal, but since kindergarten is not mandatory in Illinois, first grade is the first universal point of entry.

<sup>10</sup> [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/course-types/youth/](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/take-a-course/course-types/youth/)

# FAKELIA GUYTON

## DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform

### PROBLEM

Many young children are not receiving routine developmental screenings before entering kindergarten. This may pose a risk because developmental delays or disabilities may go undetected and this may lead children to enter school at a disadvantage. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-Administration for Children and Families reports that as many as one in four children through age five are at risk for a developmental delay or disability. Early identification allows communities to intervene earlier, leading to more effective and less expensive treatment during the preschool years, rather than costly special education services later in public schools.<sup>1</sup>

Child development screenings provide opportunities to identify developmental delays early and to intervene during the child's most critical period of brain development. According to the National Survey of Children's Health, Illinois is ranked fourth highest in the nation for children at moderate risk for developmental, mental, or social delays, yet Illinois ranks twelfth in the nation for administration of developmental screenings. Only 34.4 percent of parents reported that their child (age 10 months to 5 years) received a developmental screening.<sup>2</sup>

Nationally, children living at or below the federal poverty line are more than twice as likely to be at high risk for developmental delays compared to their peers living at more than twice the poverty line (19 and seven percent, respectively).<sup>3</sup> The High/Scope Perry Preschool study describes what is known as the achievement gap. The gap references the disparity in academic performance between children born into families with limited resources and who often have multiple risk factors (which also include developmental delays) for academic failure compared to those from more advantaged backgrounds.<sup>4</sup>

Studies have shown that when interventions are not made before a child enters kindergarten, the achievement gap widens between disadvantaged and advantaged children as they move through the grade levels.<sup>5</sup> Research further

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<sup>1</sup> [www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/child-health-development/watch-me-thrive](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/child-health-development/watch-me-thrive)

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved [08/03/16] from: [www.childhealthdata.org](http://www.childhealthdata.org)

<sup>3</sup> [www.childtrends.org/indicators/screening-and-risk-for-developmental-delay/](http://www.childtrends.org/indicators/screening-and-risk-for-developmental-delay/)

<sup>4</sup> [www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/apr06/num45/toc.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/apr06/num45/toc.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> [www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/apr06/num45/toc.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/apr06/num45/toc.aspx)

indicates that attempts to address the problem after children enter kindergarten (through tutoring, ESL classes, afterschool programs, Saturday school, and summer school) are often too little too late.<sup>6</sup> There is no “catch-up” time built into the school calendar for children who enter the public school system unprepared to learn. Other researchers have determined that making up time by retaining students as early as kindergarten can have negative effects on later social development and academic achievement.<sup>7</sup>

## CAUSE

The majority of medical providers are committed to delivering high-quality care to their patients. However, the following systemic problems contribute to poor compliance and detection:

1. Limited training in medical school with respect to the importance and administration of in-depth developmental screenings;
2. Time constraints of pediatric visits; and
3. Lack of knowledge in the follow-up for referrals to Early Intervention services.

Despite the acknowledged responsibility of performing developmental screenings and monitoring, as well as research documenting that valid and well-standardized tools exist for the screenings, most physicians, in practice, do not routinely administer high-quality developmental screenings, thereby frequently under-detect developmental delays.<sup>8</sup>

The lack of child development training for medical providers starts long before medical school. Most students who enter medical school have backgrounds in the sciences, with minimal training in education, child development, or psychology.<sup>9</sup> In medical school, the curriculum on child development varies, and during a 3-year pediatric residency, the minimum requirement is one month of formal behavior and development training.<sup>10</sup> Parent surveys support the idea that they do not feel like their pediatricians are aware or show concern for developmental screenings.

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<sup>6</sup> Davison, M. L., et al. (2004). When do children fall behind? What can be done? *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(10), 752–761.

<sup>7</sup> [www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/apr06/num45/toc.aspx](http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/policy-priorities/apr06/num45/toc.aspx)

<sup>8</sup> [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1449461/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1449461/)

<sup>9</sup> [www.acgme.org/acWebsite/about/ab\\_ACGMEpolicyProceed07\\_05.pdf](http://www.acgme.org/acWebsite/about/ab_ACGMEpolicyProceed07_05.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [www.acgme.org/acWebsite/about/ab\\_ACGMEpolicyProceed07\\_05.pdf](http://www.acgme.org/acWebsite/about/ab_ACGMEpolicyProceed07_05.pdf)

Many well-child visits are time limited, and shorter visits are associated with reductions in content, quality of care, and parent satisfaction with care. Studies of pediatric primary care suggest that time is an important limitation to the delivery of recommended preventive services. Given the increased pace of pediatric practice, there is an increased need to monitor the length of pediatric visits and the association of visit length with content, family-centered care, and parent satisfaction with care. One-third (33.6 percent) of parents reported spending less than or about 10 minutes with the clinician at their last well-child visit, nearly half (47.1 percent) spent 11 to 20 minutes, and one-fifth of parents (20.3 percent) spent greater than 20 minutes.<sup>11</sup>

Many physicians believe, often incorrectly, that follow-up services are not available, or they are unaware of the protocols and next steps for referral. Few physicians have the background, skills, or time to help families successfully navigate the fragmented and confusing network of services a child might need. In many communities, collaboration between medical practices and Early Intervention (EI) programs needs improvement. Screening young children for developmental delay is of limited value when families lack access to and skills to navigate EI services.<sup>12</sup>

This has greater implications for racial equity as there are different experiences based on race/ethnicity. Among the tabulated categories of race and ethnicity, Latino children are the most likely to have a high risk for developmental delays, followed by Black children, with White children the least likely to have a high risk. In 2011-2012, Latino and Black children were more than twice as likely as White children to have a high risk for delays (17 and 13 percent, respectively, compared with seven percent of White children).<sup>13</sup>

## SOLUTION

While pediatricians and family practice doctors feel pressure to pack more visits into a day, there are examples of ways to integrate family supports within time-limited visits. Consideration should be given to build upon the existing work of successful models like the HealthySteps<sup>14</sup> program from the Zero to Three advocacy organization currently being implemented in Advocate Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove.

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<sup>11</sup> [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21930541](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21930541)

<sup>12</sup> [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1449461/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1449461/)

<sup>13</sup> [www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/111\\_Developmental-Risk-and-Screening.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/111_Developmental-Risk-and-Screening.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.healthysteps.org/>

HealthySteps is a unique program based in a pediatrician's office that includes, but is not limited to, helping families identify, understand and manage parenting challenges like feeding, behavior, sleep, development and adapting to life with a young child. Illinois should consider piloting HealthySteps in additional hospitals throughout the state and conduct a feasibility study to explore how these practice-based intervention strategies can be adopted by more pediatricians and family practice doctors offices.

Sharing best practices and lessons learned can influence more medical providers to consider practical steps for implementing protocols for licensed nurse practitioners to obtain training on child development and the Early Intervention services as well as early learning program options available to children and families within their community.

Additionally, an independent review should be conducted to determine the gaps in pre-service education for physicians without child development coursework. All licensed physicians serving children ages birth to five years old should have required child development coursework in their formal education prior to beginning practice. Additionally, child development education should be a required component in continuing education and professional development standards. With increased professional development opportunities, physicians will have more knowledge to recognize the importance of administering a standardized tool for developmental screenings along with developmental monitoring and the necessary follow-up for referrals to Early Intervention.

## OUTCOME

There are documented financial benefits for early and proactive interventions. Studies have shown that intervention prior to kindergarten has huge academic, social, and economic benefits, including savings to society of \$30,000 to \$100,000 per child. Although substantial, the money saved is not the only measure of value—especially to the 1-in-25 households with a preschool child who lives with a disability. Late identification of developmental delays and disabilities forces states, schools, and taxpayers to pay for expensive special education programs for challenges that could have been mitigated, or at least treated more effectively and at a lower cost, during the early years.

If the proposed solutions are implemented, all children in Illinois will receive consistent and timely developmental screenings by their medical providers because they will have been adequately educated prior to service. Medical providers who serve young children would implement interventions within their medical practice that will streamline processes and ensure referrals to Early

Intervention. As a logical progression, there will be an increase in children and families making connections to Early Intervention and appropriate support services in a more timely and efficient manner.

Consequently, the information from developmental screenings will be incorporated into the child's health care plan so that medical staff are able to review and better support families during regular doctor visits. All medical providers serving young children will fully understand their critical role in early identification and intervention; and thereby will implement thorough developmental screenings and rely less upon developmental monitoring during visits.

Medical providers significantly contribute to a child's health and wellness, but they also serve as an essential catalytic agent to help reduce the cost burden on special education services in the public school system. Therefore, medical providers play a critical role in the larger ecosystem that supports children and families leading to an increase in a child's prospect for school readiness. As a result, Illinois can continue to build its reputation as a leader in early childhood by becoming a model state where medical providers, parents, and community stakeholders have the knowledge and close gaps in services that support all young children and families leading to healthy growth and development that will last a lifetime.

### PROBLEM

Illinois needs a more consistent way to ensure school district leaders are actively engaged at community collaboration tables. In response to the need for better coordination and effectiveness of the many systems and programs that impact young children and their families, the state of Illinois has turned to Community Systems Development (CSD) as a key solution. This effort generally takes the form of state support for and guidance of local place-based collaborations (commonly referred to as “community collaborations”) that convene cross-sector stakeholders to align, coordinate, and improve their local systems for better quality, access, and equity in early care and education. However, in many communities, CSD work is not reaching its full potential impact because a crucial element to success is missing – the engagement of K-12 school and district leadership. There is disagreement across community collaborations about whether the K-12 systems play a sufficient role in the success of these efforts.

Across the field of early care and education, CSD is commonly defined as: coordinating policies, programs, and services; creating infrastructure; and improving integration and achieving scale, for all efforts related to the success of children and their families. CSD improves responsiveness to the needs of families, uses public resources more efficiently and effectively, promotes racial equity, better prepares young people for the future, and more effectively incorporates brain development research into best practices for care and learning.<sup>1</sup> This work brings all the key stakeholders to the table to improve programs and services in: early learning and development, mental and physical health, and family leadership and support.<sup>2</sup> It shines light on the greatest needs, and gets everyone weaving their efforts and resources together in the pursuit of better outcomes for children. It helps eliminate redundancies, and creates more streamlined sharing of best practices across a community.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.buildinitiative.org/TheIssues/SystemsBuilding.aspx](http://www.buildinitiative.org/TheIssues/SystemsBuilding.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> Early Childhood Systems Working Group. Comprehensive Early Childhood System-Building: A Tool to Inform Discussions on Collaborative, Cross-Sector Planning. Retrieved from: [www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/ECSWG%20Systems%20Planning%20Tool\\_2014.pdf](http://www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/ECSWG%20Systems%20Planning%20Tool_2014.pdf)

Focus groups conducted by Illinois Action for Children revealed that leaders of the most effective collaborations attribute much of the sustainability of their success to the strong role and commitment of administrators from the local school district(s). Coincidentally, one key barrier cited by other collaborations is lack of school district involvement.<sup>3</sup> The absence of voice and commitment of the K-12 school system in a community collaboration results in missed opportunities including data and information sharing, referral relationships, shared professional development, and kindergarten transitions. Efforts to improve quality, access, equity, and sustainability are undermined, especially with respect to measurable gains made by early care and education services and programs.

## CAUSE

The birth and growth of these efforts stem from a variety of origins, with no established, unifying foundation across the state. New funding streams, pilot project ideas, local circumstances, and policy momentum have rooted these efforts – offering limited attempts to develop unifying frameworks, or foundational elements, and especially none that are required.

At this time, while there is dedicated staff and technical assistance programs at both Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) to support community collaborations as they develop, there is no consistent governance or leading body at the state to build an aligned foundation, set of expectations, or best practices across all community collaborations. As such, although school district leadership is central to strong community collaborations, there is no mandate or standardized incentive for school districts to engage in community-wide planning for early care and education. Whether school district leadership engages in and/or leads community collaboration efforts is left up to the chance of circumstances, or whether a particular administrator “gets it.”

This challenge is amplified by a lack of emphasis on community collaboration in the job expectations and accountabilities of school and district leaders. Funding, evaluation, and policy for the K-12 system often incentivizes principals and superintendents to narrow their focus to the students (and their families) who are currently attending their schools, and the instruction and building operations that are directly within the district’s control. This tends to leave out the more complex lens of collaborating with the organizations and services that

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<sup>3</sup> Partner\*Plan\*Act, an Illinois Action for Children Community Systems Development Initiative. Tool Kit for Engaging School Districts in Early Childhood Collaborations. Retrieved from: [partnerplanact.org/wp-content/School-District-Toolkit](http://partnerplanact.org/wp-content/School-District-Toolkit)



impact children and families before they arrive at school, or who serve families across the age span of the child.

Additionally, while the state has made many gains in ensuring higher quality preparation for principals, there is still work to do in preparing K-12 administrators to partner with other systems and stakeholders, or to contribute to community-wide efforts that make an impact on their districts. Illinois has been recognized for innovation in policies that improve school leadership, but community engagement remains a key area to focus on going forward.

## SOLUTION

While there are various paths for building more effective community collaborations, one promising avenue is building the capacity of school and district leadership. This could be accomplished by incorporating a primer on CSD, its impact on school outcomes, and tools for engaging community collaborations into the certification of administrators' Professional Educator License (PEL) endorsements.

Specifically for principals, it should be embedded in the mandated continuing education courses for maintaining an endorsement, either through the 5-year renewal cycle or in the annual administrative academies. For superintendents, CSD principles and implementation practices should be brought into the pre-endorsement coursework and administrative practicum experience requirements. If adopted by ISBE's Educator Effectiveness Division, this strategy would ensure that both building- and district-level administrators would enhance their skills and knowledge, and are able to do so at a time in their leadership tenure that is most likely to result in adoption of the concepts into their work.

Existing resources can serve as a foundation to adapt and craft this training, as well as embed it into existing endorsement and ongoing professional development processes. For example, Gateways to Opportunity offers a curriculum bundle for early childhood service providers on the basics of CSD and its benefits. Additionally, Illinois Action for Children developed a tool kit<sup>4</sup> for community collaborations to connect with schools. Both of these tools - and others like them – provide a strong foundation to direct similar learning toward school and district leaders.

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<sup>4</sup> Partner\*Plan\*Act, an Illinois Action for Children Community Systems Development Initiative. Tool Kit for Engaging School Districts in Early Childhood Collaborations. Retrieved from: [partnerplanact.org/wp-content/School-District-Toolkit](http://partnerplanact.org/wp-content/School-District-Toolkit)

There is incredible opportunity to reimagine the possibilities for community collaborations in Illinois. While Race to the Top funding recently closed out Innovation Zone work, ISBE is ramping up a grant program to provide support to community collaborations across the state and leadership changes at OECD provide new energy to CSD efforts. These actions signal opportunity to reflect on lessons learned for supporting the many built up CSD components.

Additionally, the recently formed Governor's Children's Cabinet brings ISBE and OECD closer to each other's operations. Also significant is the emphasis in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on training and infrastructure in the early learning space, lending well to enhanced community collaborations, especially as they relate to K-12 connections. Finally, the recent changes to principal preparation requirements to include education on early childhood development provides a model and will-builder for additional administrator education focused on the shared interests of the early childhood and elementary school fields.

## OUTCOME

By including CSD into continuing education for principals, and into pre-endorsement education for superintendents, the state will increase the likelihood that children and families across Illinois will feel the full benefits of community systems building in the following ways:

- Mutual gains from early childhood to K-12, through: better understanding of root causes of community issues; joining space, material, and human resources; referral connections and shared information about services; coordinated professional development; and data sharing about demographics, enrollment, and needs.
- Better coordination of services for families through aligned enrollment and outreach efforts, shared intake processes, and connected developmental screenings for children.
- Help for school and district leaders, so they are more consistently able to connect with and get support from other systems and services in pursuit of the student outcomes they are accountable for.

Ultimately, these improvements will result in increased access to services, improved quality of programs, and more equitable and consistent outcomes for young children and their families across Illinois.

## PROBLEM

Recent policy changes in Illinois hold the promise of preparing children for successful entry, integration, and achievement in school:

- 1) The Early Childhood Block Grant returned to 2009 funding levels after receiving a \$23 million restoration in FY15 and a \$79 million increase in FY16<sup>1</sup>;
- 2) Federal Race to the Top grant dollars, between 2012 and 2017, established consensus on the definition of high-quality early childhood programs across all early childhood providers, including preschool, head start, and licensed child care centers and homes, while expanding the capacity of the workforce, data systems, and community systems<sup>2</sup>; and
- 3) The implementation of a statewide tool to assess kindergarten readiness, the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) in school year 2017-2018 with 95 percent of enrolled kindergarteners assessed as of December 2017.

While these are important gains for the field—increasing access to and quality of the state’s early childhood system—Illinois lacks concrete policy to foster continuity between early learning programs and early elementary schools thus, undermining a full return on these state investments. Kindergarten readiness depends not only on access to high-quality preschool programs and kindergarten entry assessments, but also on coordination and alignment between preschool and kindergarten programs with an explicit focus on preschool and kindergarten teacher collaboration. The concept of *school readiness* is a collective endeavor that includes *children’s readiness* to enter school and a *school’s readiness* for children<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.actforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/FY18-Policy-Priorities-FINAL.pdf](http://www.actforchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/FY18-Policy-Priorities-FINAL.pdf) (retrieved February 8, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> [buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Work/State%20and%20Local/IllinoisRTTELCReportFINAL.pdf](http://buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Work/State%20and%20Local/IllinoisRTTELCReportFINAL.pdf) (retrieved February 8, 2018)

<sup>3</sup> Clark, P., & Zygmunt-Fillwalk, E. (2008). Ensuring school readiness through a successful transition to kindergarten: The Indiana ready schools initiative, *Childhood Education*, 84:5, 287-293, [www.dx.doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2008.10523026](http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2008.10523026)

Instead of solely measuring whether a child is enrolled in preschool and has the requisite skills for kindergarten (as identified in state board of education goals<sup>4</sup>), schools and teachers need to develop appropriately-aligned expectations for what children should know and do when transitioning from preschool to kindergarten. The incongruence between preschool and kindergarten teacher expectations of children at kindergarten entry has been documented over time. A 1989 study revealed preschool teachers had higher expectations for kindergarten entry skills than kindergarten teachers—preschool teachers rated 78 items as being very important for kindergarten entry compared to 6 items rated as very important by kindergarten teachers. For skills at middle and end of kindergarten, kindergarten teachers rated 47 items and then 122 items, respectively, as very important. According to this study, preschool teachers' expectations for kindergarten entry most aligned with kindergarten teachers' expectations for kindergarten exit.<sup>5</sup> A 2000 study of teacher beliefs about children in a low-resource community revealed preschool teachers tend to emphasize interpersonal over self-regulatory abilities when compared to their kindergarten counterparts, and academic knowledge more than their counterparts.<sup>6</sup> A 2003 study of teacher expectations discovered younger teachers valued academic skills more than older teachers.<sup>7</sup> Another study in 2015 revealed misalignment between preschool and kindergarten teachers was most prevalent in their beliefs about the importance of academic skills.<sup>8</sup>

Without a state policy outlining strategies to foster alignment of teacher expectations for children transitioning from preschool to kindergarten, there is risk of creating instructional and experiential gaps in the classroom that would cause the state to lose out on the full benefit of state preschool investments. Creating a more balanced approach to school readiness policy would ensure that schools are ready for children—a 1998 call to action by The National Education Goals Panel.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [www2.illinois.gov/sites/children/Pages/Well-Educated-Performance.aspx](http://www2.illinois.gov/sites/children/Pages/Well-Educated-Performance.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> Hains, A. H. (1989). A comparison of preschool and kindergarten teacher expectations for school readiness. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 4(1), 75-88. [www.eric.ed.gov/?id=ED287610](http://www.eric.ed.gov/?id=ED287610)

<sup>6</sup> Piotrkowski, C. S., Botsko, M., & Matthews, E. (2000). Parents' and teachers' beliefs about children's school readiness in a high-need community. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15, 537-558. [www.dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006\(01\)00072-2](http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(01)00072-2)

<sup>7</sup> Lin, H-L., Lawrence, F. R., & Gorrell, J. (2003). Kindergarten teachers' views of children's readiness for school. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 18, 225-237. doi: 10.1016/S0885-2006(03)00028-0

<sup>8</sup> Abrya, T., Lathamb, S., Bassokb, D., & LoCasale-Crouch, J. (2015). Preschool and kindergarten teachers' beliefs about early school competencies: Misalignment matters for kindergarten adjustment. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 31, 78-88. [www.dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2015.01.001](http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2015.01.001)

<sup>9</sup> [govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/readysch.pdf](http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/negp/reports/readysch.pdf) (retrieved February 8, 2018)

Differing beliefs between preschool and kindergarten teachers is also an equity issue that creates the risk of widening the achievement gap. While misalignment in teacher beliefs can negatively impact outcomes for all children, the implications are disproportionately greater for children from socioeconomically marginalized backgrounds.<sup>10</sup> These children are more susceptible to the negative influence of teacher misalignment compared to their more resource-rich peers.<sup>11</sup> Research tells us that when children develop academic, self-regulation, and inter-personal competence they are better able to mitigate exposure to risk factors. When homes lack the resources needed to regularly communicate this positive message along with developmental support, consistency across formal learning environments become even more critical.<sup>12</sup> There are other studies that identify males, children with disabilities, children from lower socioeconomic status families, and children from racial or ethnic groups as subgroups with higher risk factors for experiencing transition difficulties.<sup>13</sup> Each of these subgroups are plagued with false narratives about their background and lack positive messages about their academic potential. It is the responsibility of state education systems to ensure teacher expectations aren't guided by implicit biases, and that preschool and kindergarten teachers are aligned in healthy understandings of vulnerable subgroups.

Other states (i.e. West Virginia, Oregon, Colorado, and Washington) have advanced policies to foster greater coordination between preschool and kindergarten systems to ease transition and maximize child outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Illinois is just beginning to address system alignment in this way with the passage of IL - HJR24 in 2017. The resolution requires the P-20 Council, in collaboration with the Early Learning Council, to establish an advisory committee to review best practices for facilitating effective kindergarten transition and to draft a report for the General Assembly, Governor and Illinois State Board of Education with recommendations to enhance the kindergarten transition experience for children, families, and educators. Given the formation of this committee, there is a viable avenue to advance the opportunity for greater alignment of teacher beliefs and expectations.

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<sup>10</sup> See Abrya (2015)

<sup>11</sup> See Abrya (2015)

<sup>12</sup> See Abrya (2015)

<sup>13</sup> Athanasiou, M. S. (2006). It takes a village: Children's transition to kindergarten. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 21, 468 – 473. [www.doi.org/10.1037/h0084133](http://www.doi.org/10.1037/h0084133)

<sup>14</sup> na-production.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Connecting-the-Steps.pdf

## CAUSE

Preschool and kindergarten governance and systems of support represent significantly different professional worlds. Kindergarten programs are solely governed by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), while preschool programs are administered by multiple state and federal agencies including ISBE, Illinois Department of Human Services, Head Start and their grantee agencies. Compared to the single governance of kindergarten programs, preschool programs span a large range of funding streams, settings, quality goals and resulting outcomes for children and families.

There are also significant differences in teacher qualifications and training requirements, when comparing kindergarten to preschools, that foster differences in pedagogical practices, academic and social expectations, and classroom environments. These differences encourage a range of ideas about kindergarten readiness—the competencies children need to be successful, and related practice. Teacher background, qualifications and training influences their personal theories and beliefs about what children should know and do in preschool and kindergarten and, in turn, this influences their instructional decisions and assessment practices.<sup>15</sup>

The sweeping differences among preschool programs creates a fractured environment that makes alignment of teacher expectation difficult. Equally, the disparate systems and global differences between preschool and kindergarten programs further complicate efforts to foster alignment and continuity for children. Taken together, there are structural and systemic barriers to ensuring schools are ready for children. These operational differences contribute to preschool and kindergarten teachers forming misaligned beliefs and expectations of children, resulting in misaligned learning environments and instructional practices. Many children and families are vulnerable to the discontinuity, when in fact, continuity of care is proven to ensure maximum success when transitioning into kindergarten.<sup>16</sup>

The absence of a single governance structure, that aligns preschool and kindergarten systems, creates a fractured system of relationships with limited opportunities for partnership. The system of relationships among early childhood programs and early elementary programs is a critical predictor of

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<sup>15</sup> Ross, E. W., Cornett, J. W., McCutcheon, G. (1992). *Teacher Personal Theorizing: Connecting Curriculum Practice, Theory and Research*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

<sup>16</sup> Love, J. M., Logue, M. E., Trudeau, J. V., & Thayer, K. (1992). *Transitions to kindergarten in American schools: final report of the national transition study*. Hampton, NH:RMC Research Corporation.

successful transitions.<sup>17</sup> When teachers are isolated with little to no interaction, across home-based, community-based, and school-based environments, misaligned expectations and practices form. The lack of physical or relational proximity between preschool and kindergarten teachers, and their leaders, limits opportunities for collaboration required to foster aligned and shared perspectives.<sup>18</sup>

Preschool programs often do not track where students attend kindergarten and vice versa. Without a formal, standardized process for collecting these data, preschool and kindergarten teachers and school leaders lack the information to create meaningful collaborations that foster alignment. Preschool teachers are often unaware of where their students are going and kindergarten teachers are often unaware of the type of preschool program (if a program at all) students are coming from. Unlike the high school to college transition, where high schools track college admission for graduating students and college applications collect information on feeder high schools, the preschool to kindergarten transition lack similar data collection.

## SOLUTION

New kindergarten transition policy in Illinois must consider the importance of aligning developmental and pedagogical expectations among preschool and kindergarten teachers and their school leaders. Greater alignment in teacher expectations encourages seamless transitions between preschool and kindergarten for students; and seamless transitions foster enhanced academic, social, and behavioral adjustments during early elementary.<sup>19</sup> Explicit policy is needed to foster physical and relational proximity that facilitates formal teacher-school collaborations—preschool and kindergarten personnel need time and space to intentionally build key relationships.

Successful transitions are multi-faceted and require communication and engagement among teachers across schools. Therefore, policy solutions aimed at fostering alignment are best implemented within the local context of schools and communities where children and families are transitioning. However, state-level policy can play an important role in creating the context for collaboration

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<sup>17</sup> Krakouer, J., Mitchell, P., Trevitt, J. & Kochanoff, A. (2017). Early years transitions: Supporting children and families at risk of experiencing vulnerability. Rapid literature review. East Melbourne, Australia: Department of Education and Training. Retrieved from [www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/transitionresearch.aspx](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/research/Pages/transitionresearch.aspx)

<sup>18</sup> [www.educationnext.org/schoolhouse-network-how-school-buildings-affect-teacher-collaboration/](http://www.educationnext.org/schoolhouse-network-how-school-buildings-affect-teacher-collaboration/) (retrieved January 20, 2018)

<sup>19</sup> Lloyd, J. W., Steinberg, D., & Wilhelm-Chapin, M. K. (1999). Research on transition to kindergarten. In R. C. Pianta, & M. Cox (Eds.), *The Transition to Kindergarten* (pp.305–316). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

by removing barriers and incentivizing effective practices. The broad preschool-to-kindergarten policy solutions below align with those advanced by New America<sup>20</sup>; and include new recommendations specific to the Illinois State Board of Education and Department of Human Services. Implementing these policy solutions in a sequential order will result in increased alignment of preschool and kindergarten teacher expectations in Illinois:

**1. Provide guidance to assist in local planning and transition activities**

- a. Amend Illinois State Board of Education Administrative Code Part 375 (student records) to include a new section entitled “Public and Nonpublic Schools: Kindergarten Transitions.” Similar to the current “Public and Nonpublic Schools: Transmission of Records for Transfer Students section,” language in the new section will offer guidance on using kindergarten enrollment forms to capture data on a child’s previous school or care environment and parent permission for feeder and receiving schools to share student records. Additional guidance will encourage specific types of student records and data to be shared along with defined timeframes for sharing.

**2. Use Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements and funds to support transition activities**

- a. Allocate a portion of ESSA resources to support districts in implementing new data collection and analysis tools related to new kindergarten enrollment forms and new student records data.
- b. Amend Illinois State Board of Education Administrative Code Part 100 (Requirements for Accounting, Budgeting, Financial Reporting, and Auditing) to include a new classification category for funds used to support transitions across developmental stages—including resources dedicated to incoming kindergarteners and incoming high school students.
- c. Use ESSA site-based expenditure guidance to encourage reporting of school funds dedicated to supporting children transitioning into kindergarten.

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<sup>20</sup> [www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/connecting-steps/](http://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/policy-papers/connecting-steps/) (retrieved July 15, 2017)



### **3. Bring directors and principals (and respective teachers) together to improve alignment**

- a. Issue collective guidance from the Department of Children and Family Services and the Illinois State Board of Education regarding the need for preschool and kindergarten teachers to have protected time dedicated to forming learning communities that minimally focus on aligning expectations of children at kindergarten entry. The Illinois State Board of Education will make tools and models available to support data-driven, preschool-kindergarten learning communities.
- b. Amend Department of Children and Family Services licensing standards (Subpart D: Staffing and Subpart E: Program Requirements) to require child care staff to participate in collaborative activities with a child's transitioning school, along with required minimum clock hours dedicated to these collaboration activities.
- c. Amend Illinois State Board of Education Administrative Code to require districts to document how kindergarten programs will coordinate and collaborate with a group of feeder preschools, including home- and center-based. Feeder-receiver school collaborations will be determined by analyzing data from the newly required fields on the kindergarten enrollment forms. A copy of district plans as well as specific agreements between individual elementary schools and their home- and center-based program partners shall be on file with the district. Qualifying agreements will be eligible for Title I, II, III, or VI funds, pursuant to their respective purposes.

## **OUTCOME**

Implementing these state and district policies will produce positive outcomes at the state-, district-, school- and child-level. Individually and collectively, these policies promote optimal transitions between preschool and kindergarten—increased alignment through improved data collection and usage, formal collaborations, and protected time to exchange knowledge. More specifically,

- appropriations that ease and enhance preschool-to-kindergarten transitions are investments in the state's kindergarten readiness goals;

- administrative policies that foster enhanced communication between preschool programs and elementary schools promote higher quality learning environments in both settings; and
- alignment policies that bring preschool and kindergarten teachers (and school leaders) together to explore their expectations of children and instructional practices result in seamless transitions for children and families.

Data collected through the kindergarten enrollment process will inform elementary schools on feeder trends and patterns. With these data, elementary schools can initiate formal partnerships and plans for collaborations, such as peer learning teams, that lead to increased alignment of teacher expectations and practices.

Increased and regular collaboration among preschool and kindergarten programs will narrow the broad range of teacher beliefs about the idea of kindergarten readiness—what children need and how to match teaching to support readiness skills. Furthermore, with parental consent, collaborations can also focus on supporting individual children. Through collaboration and data-driven learning communities, preschool and kindergarten teachers within a district area can negotiate their expectations for developmentally appropriate and challenging experiences for future transitions that cross fragmented governance structures.

Building a system that supports teacher relationships across learning contexts produces schools ready to respond to children’s developmental needs and, consequently, children develop the capabilities needed for success in kindergarten and beyond.

### PROBLEM

The State of Illinois, local community early childhood systems, and service providers are working to align and coordinate service design and delivery in order to maximize services to infants and toddlers confronting risks such as developmental delays and disabilities, poverty, homelessness, child maltreatment and prenatal drug exposure among others. However, current state contracting processes miss opportunities to create a coherent interface between these programs as children, who are eligible for Women Infant Child Nutrition Program (WIC) or referred for assessment through Child Family Connections Agencies (CFCs) in the Early Intervention Program (EI), may also meet the criteria for services by home visiting programs.

WIC and CFCs are important gateway programs for children from ages birth to three to access home visiting programs, yet families with eligible children are often unaware of home visiting programs or encounter barriers when accessing services. Agencies that hold WIC and CFC contracts are inconsistent with informing eligible families about the programs and coordinating referrals. As a result, agencies offering home visiting programs expend significant staff time on outreach and enrollment, some have trouble filling caseloads, and others enroll children with lower risks in order to achieve caseload capacity.

In addition, the current status quo may result in loss of funding and a mistaken conclusion that eligible families do not need these programs. This exacerbates the problem of ensuring adequate funding levels to provide equitable access to important early care and learning programs for children from families with limited economic resources and children with developmental delays.

WIC programs and CFCs can play a powerful role in enabling families to access additional services aimed at ensuring that parents receive support in their parenting role. Agencies delivering home visiting services or coordinated intake services report mixed success in establishing strong referral mechanisms with WIC providers and CFCs.

Home visiting and coordinated intake agencies have set up recruitment tables at WIC offices or successfully set up a referral system with individual WIC program managers. These efforts meet with varied success because some WIC offices serve multiple municipalities and the home visiting agencies have no way of

knowing whether families from their catchment area will be at WIC offices on any given day. Other arrangements are personality dependent. The ability to establish warm referral systems depends on the individual program manager or WIC contract holder.

Additionally, CFCs can play a critical role in connecting children with developmental delays – especially those with delays that miss the 30 percent threshold required for eligibility of Illinois Early intervention (EI) services. These children are intended beneficiaries of home visiting, but they are often left out due to the lack of a coherent and consistent referral approach between CFCs and home visiting program.

These dynamics illustrate the ways in which the synapses between state agencies, state subcontractors and local service providers are weak and often nonexistent, resulting in vulnerable children and their families falling through the cracks of services. Programs designed to support children and their families are fragmented, resulting in incoherence between programs that benefit very young children and their families.

The result of these lost opportunities is that families do not access programs that help parents understand and promote their children's development. Parents miss the opportunity to gain partners in their parenting role, hone effective parenting skills, acquire knowledge about and insight into their child's development, and gain connections to other supports that will enable them to improve their personal and family life. Children are less likely to meet the statewide goal of entering kindergarten eager to learn and ready to succeed.

## CAUSE

WIC and EI are gateway programs because they are in a unique position to help weave a strong web of early childhood supports and services across Illinois by ensuring that the vulnerable children and families they serve do not fall through the cracks of programs, services, and data systems. This opportunity is lost because the state contract does not articulate their work in a gateway framework.

Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) can facilitate this connection by integrating a requirement to establish referral protocols into the contracting process with agencies providing WIC and CFC services. Without referral protocols embedded in contracts, the full potential of programs like WIC and EI is limited with respect to helping ensure that eligible children, especially those whose families may be hard to engage or find, access high-value programs.

WIC agencies have sometimes offered a reflexive response stating that confidentiality laws prevent them from engaging in referral processes with home visiting coordinated intake agencies and individual services providers. They cited the need for legal agreements and the appropriate accompanying forms to ensure compliance with confidentiality laws and that they do not have the capacity or resources to develop these agreements and forms.

WIC and EI staff also state that they lack sufficient understanding about home visiting programs and do not know how to encourage families to participate. Furthermore, WIC staff indicate that they lack the time to share information with families at the registration appointment.

One CFC shared that they are not involved with families after assessments conclude that a child is not eligible for EI but does demonstrate a developmental delay (i.e., does not meet the 30 percent threshold). The task for meeting with those families falls to contracted consultants who are not required to follow a protocol for connecting families to services when children's development hits this "gray zone."

## SOLUTION

IDHS should have contractual requirements for WIC providers and CFCs to establish data sharing arrangements and referral protocols with home visiting programs and or coordinated intake agencies. Referring families will become part of the performance requirements for WIC providers and CFCs. Part C referral provisions in the 2003 reauthorization of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) provides a precedent for how this type of requirement can open the door to a powerful partnership with great potential benefits for children under age three. Enacting similar performance requirements for CFCs and WIC will raise the value placed on referring families to home visiting programs and mitigate the differential access to supports for children based on individual provider or agency resourcefulness to connect families and children to important programs.

IDHS legal counsel should develop the data sharing agreements—including referral forms needed to support strong referrals— between WIC, EI and home visiting agencies to ensure uniformity and legality of arrangements. IDHS should train program managers on the new requirements, the data sharing agreements and the use of referral forms in order to ensure their capacity to guide and support the contracting agencies and ensure consistency in implementation.

These steps will mitigate any concerns the state and contracting agencies will have around adequately protecting child and family personal information.

Home visiting and/or coordinated intake programs will provide training for WIC and EI staff on the logic model, program components, research and evidence underlying home visiting programs along with simple scripts to ensure their knowledge of and confidence in talking about the program when encouraging families to consider enrolling.

The Early Learning Council is a natural group for advocacy and oversight of this process. Additionally, as the convener for the multiple departments in the state that play a role with WIC, EI and home visiting programs, the Governor's Office for Early Childhood Development can play an important role in facilitating cross-departmental problem-solving and implementation around these strategies.

## OUTCOME

Implementation of the recommendations will result in the following:

- A reduction in home visiting slot vacancies;
- Administrative changes that reduce fragmentation between programs;
- Engendering a dialogue for collaborative problem-solving among state agencies and between those agencies and their subcontractors; and
- Fostering a collaborative effort among WIC, EI and home visiting and coordinated intake agencies to reach "hard-to-engage" families.

As it becomes routine practice, additional strategies may become more apparent for aligning and integrating services to increase access to vital programs for children, which translates into an even stronger web of support.

The end result of the successful implementation of this recommendation will be that home visiting programs are fully enrolled with lengthy waiting lists and that children with the greatest needs are receiving services. Parents are less taxed in their efforts to find ways to support their children's early development. Preschool and elementary schools should report that children are arriving at their doors developmentally on-track, and parents are better equipped to support their child's learning and to advocate for them. Finally, public policy makers will increase their understanding of the efficacy of the programs and will commit to fully funding them to meet the needs of all children who are eligible.

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# WORKFORCE: CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

**KAREN ROSS-WILLIAMS**

Christopher House

## PROBLEM

For several decades, the early childhood education workforce has experienced an increasingly widening disparity between the racial, ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of teachers and the children in their classrooms. The National Association of Independent Schools asserts, “Although there has been an increase in classroom diversity, the demographics of the teachers in U.S. classrooms...have changed little over the past decades, creating a cultural mismatch between students and teachers”.<sup>1</sup> This imbalance reflects the historical shortage of diverse teacher candidates entering the pipeline.

Moreover, the diversity of children and families served in early childhood programs has changed dramatically over the past 20 years. There has been notable growth of both immigrants and non-English speaking families entering early childhood education programs, and this trend is expected to continue. Projected student growth from 2005 through 2020 will largely come from the children of immigrants.<sup>2</sup> Nationally, African American and Latino students make up 40.7 percent of the public-school population. Although many school populations – both urban and rural – are increasingly made up of Black and Latino students, over 40 percent of public schools lack a single teacher of color. Many urban and high-poverty schools are predominately staffed with White teachers while teachers of color are disproportionately absent from the teacher

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<sup>1</sup> “Bridging the Cultural Gap Between Teachers and Students.” *NAIS - Bridging the Cultural Gap Between Teachers and Students*, National Association of Independent Schools, 2007, [www.nais.org/magazine/independent-teacher/fall-2007/bridging-the-cultural-gap-between-teachers-and-stu/](http://www.nais.org/magazine/independent-teacher/fall-2007/bridging-the-cultural-gap-between-teachers-and-stu/).

<sup>2</sup> Fry R.(2008)

workforce. Furthermore, the 2016 Early Childhood Workforce Index published by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment found that 63 percent of center-based teaching staff in the early childhood workforce are White, with only 17 percent and 5 percent representing African Americans and Latinos, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

Research supports that a lack of teachers of color has adverse effects on the establishment of cultural links between home and school, the expectations of students of color, the creation of inclusive environments, and turnover rates in hard-to-staff schools. Furthermore, the Yale Child Study Center found that preschool teachers show signs of implicit bias when administering discipline and concluded that the race of the teacher plays a large role in the outcome.<sup>4</sup> This may account for the higher expulsion rates of Latino and African American preschoolers with nearly three preschoolers expelled for every 1,000 enrolled.<sup>5</sup> In 2017, in response to what some call a “pre-school to prison pipeline,” Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner signed Public Act 100-0105 that protects all children from expulsion in publicly-funded early childhood programs.<sup>6</sup>

High-quality early childhood education programs can lead to significant successes for children of color. However, as children in early childhood programs increasingly reflect diverse backgrounds,<sup>7</sup> it is essential for the teaching workforce to also reflect diversity, affirmatively respond to their cultural and racial identities, and provide a well-rounded and inclusive education. Preliminary findings from the 2017 Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Hiring Survey highlight that the most difficult position to hire is a lead teacher who is licensed by the Illinois Board of Education (ISBE) with an endorsement in early childhood education.<sup>8</sup> The inability to retain highly effective teachers of color, like all teachers, is also a challenge for many early childhood programs. “In ECE [Early Childhood Education], maintaining the current culturally and linguistically diverse workforce, especially in light of increasing qualifications, as well as reducing stratification by race and language among lead teachers and

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<sup>3</sup> “Early Childhood Workforce Index 2016.” *Berkely.edu*.

<sup>4</sup> Hathaway, Bill. “Implicit Bias May Explain High Preschool Expulsion Rates for Black Children.” *YaleNews*, 2 Feb. 2018, [news.yale.edu/2016/09/27/implicit-bias-may-explain-high-preschool-expulsion-rates-black-children](https://news.yale.edu/2016/09/27/implicit-bias-may-explain-high-preschool-expulsion-rates-black-children).

<sup>5</sup> Dwyer, Meghan. “Rauner Signs Bill to Prevent Preschool Expulsion.” *WGN*, 14 Aug. 2017, [wgntv.com/2017/08/14/rauner-signs-bill-to-prevent-preschool-expulsion/](http://wgntv.com/2017/08/14/rauner-signs-bill-to-prevent-preschool-expulsion/).

<sup>6</sup> “Illinois Enacts Protection from Preschool Expulsion.” *McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership*, [mccormickcenter.nl.edu/illinois-enacts-protection-from-preschool-expulsion/](http://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/illinois-enacts-protection-from-preschool-expulsion/).

<sup>7</sup> Saluja, Gitanjali. “Demographic Characteristics of Early Childhood Teachers and Structural Elements of Early Care and Education in the United States.” *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 2002, [ecrp.uiuc.edu/v4n1/saluja.html](http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v4n1/saluja.html).

<sup>8</sup> Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Hiring Survey 2017



program leaders poses...challenges.”<sup>9</sup> It has been found that, for children younger than five, having teachers who speak their home language is a critical component in promoting their school readiness.

One study concluded that students of color perform better with teachers of color<sup>10</sup> because culturally and linguistically diverse teachers tend to have higher expectations for students of color. A 2016 study conducted by John Hopkins University found that White teachers—who constitute 82 percent of the profession—are less likely to expect academic success with Black students and this was especially the case with Black boys.<sup>11</sup> The presence of a workforce that is not diverse can have long-term effects on students of color. According to a report by the Center for American Progress, in the instance when “a black student has both a black and nonblack teacher, it is the black teacher who tends to have a much higher estimation of the student’s academic abilities.”<sup>12</sup> The lack of diversity among teachers in addition to differing interpretations of student ability and behavior can provide an explanation as to why students of color have suspension and expulsion rates which are disproportionate at every level of schooling. This increases the risk of academic disengagement and the likelihood that they will later drop out of school. A teacher’s high or low expectations of a student are highly indicative of the student’s future academic success; this is referred to as the “Pygmalion Effect.”<sup>13</sup> Such expectations and mindsets may not be intentional, but the long-term effects on students cannot be ignored.

## CAUSE

The shortage of teachers of color in increasingly diverse early education classrooms cannot be linked to a single cause as there are many complex factors and entities that have contributed to the inception and augmentation of the problem. Some examples include limited interest in pursuing a teaching career or fewer candidates of color with the skills and qualifications to enter the field.

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<sup>9</sup> Whitebook, Marcy. “Building a Skilled Teacher Workforce Shared and Divergent Challenges in Early Care and Education and in Grades K-12.” *Berkely.edu*.

<sup>10</sup> Lynch, Matthew. “3 Reasons Our Classrooms Benefit from Minority Teachers.” *The Edvocate*, 14 June 2016, [www.theedadvocate.org/3-reasons-our-classrooms-benefit-from-minority-teachers/](http://www.theedadvocate.org/3-reasons-our-classrooms-benefit-from-minority-teachers/).

<sup>11</sup> Will, Madeline. “Teachers’ Low Expectations for Students of Color Found to Affect Students’

Success.” *Education Week - Teaching Now*, 21 June 2017, [blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching\\_now/2017/05/teacher\\_expectations\\_black\\_students.html](http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2017/05/teacher_expectations_black_students.html).

<sup>12</sup> Partelow, Lisette, et al. “America Needs More Teachers of Color and a More Selective Teaching Profession.” *Center for American Progress*, 14 Sept. 2017, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2017/09/14/437667/america-needs-teachers-color-selective-teaching-profession/](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2017/09/14/437667/america-needs-teachers-color-selective-teaching-profession/).

<sup>13</sup> Partelow et al.

The root cause of limited skills and qualifications can be attributed to the K-12 education system that fails children of color who may eventually pursue a teaching degree. There are well-documented achievement gaps for students of color that start as early as kindergarten entry. In their book, *Inequality at the Starting Gate: Social Background Differences in Achievement as Children Begin School*, authors Valeria Lee and David Burkam drew a number of conclusions based on analysis of the U.S. Department of Education's Early Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort. Amongst other things, they concluded "there are substantial differences by race and ethnicity in children's test scores as they begin kindergarten." Average math achievement for Latino kindergartners is 19 percent lower than white students and 21 percent lower for Blacks.<sup>14</sup> Many students of color are at a disadvantage for securing academic success later in life as this gap becomes increasingly harder to close while children matriculate through the school system. According to the Center for American Progress, a major consequence is that fewer people of color attend and complete college compared to their White peers.<sup>15</sup>

In the same way, the fairness of teacher licensure exams has become a growing issue as there have been signs of suspected racial biases in the creation of these exams.<sup>16</sup> According to research collected by the Center for American Progress, "Teacher trainees who are members of communities of color score lower on licensure exams that serve as passports to teaching careers." Therefore, it is imperative to take note that these exams can be a hindrance to students of color seeking to become educators. In addition to racial achievement gaps in the educational system and suspected bias on licensure exams, the role of the government – or the lack thereof – has contributed to an increasing disparity of teachers of color in early childhood classrooms. Only a few states have created rigorous programs to increase diversity in teaching professionals.<sup>17</sup>

## SOLUTION

A system must be developed that creates educator pathways to ensure that people of color and those with diverse language backgrounds can begin to reflect the diversity of the young child population. Addressing these disparities requires a comprehensive response that includes attention to socioeconomic,

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<sup>14</sup> Lee, Valerie E., and David T. Burkam. *Inequality at the Starting Gate: Social Background Differences in Achievement as Children Begin School*. Economic Policy Institute, 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Boser, Ulrich. "Teacher Diversity Revisited." *Center for American Progress*, 4 May 2014, [www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2014/05/04/88962/teacher-diversity-revisited/](http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2014/05/04/88962/teacher-diversity-revisited/).

<sup>16</sup> Harris, Elizabeth A. "Tough Tests for Teachers, With Question of Bias." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 17 June 2015, [www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/nyregion/with-tougher-teacher-licensing-exams-a-question-of-racial-discrimination.html?mcubz=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/nyregion/with-tougher-teacher-licensing-exams-a-question-of-racial-discrimination.html?mcubz=0).

<sup>17</sup> Boser, Ulrich. "Teacher Diversity Revisited."

ethnic, cultural, and language inequities. Closing these gaps is fundamental to the success of each child and can be accomplished through the following:

- Increase government oversight of and improve accountability for teacher preparation programs. This would ensure that teachers of color emerge from teacher preparation programs with the skills to be effective teachers with the abilities and practices needed to provide high-quality education.
- Reduce the costs accumulated from pursuing a teaching career. This can be achieved through the creation of more avenues by which potential educators of color can enter the field and by augmenting the number of qualified credential organizations.
- Create statewide initiatives that would fund teacher preparation programs specifically designed to recruit qualified and diverse candidates.
- Collaborate with junior colleges and high schools to target juniors and seniors interested in pursuing a career in teaching. Collaboration efforts should result in provisions for incentivized and increased post-secondary educational and financial support for diverse students who are studying to become teachers. “By increasing positive exposure to the teaching profession in high school through leveraging existing Career and Technical Education (CTE) Career Fairs, as well as promoting education pathways programs in high schools, Illinois could maximize the number of students entering college with a strong interest in education and with experience in the profession.”<sup>18</sup> Some Illinois school districts have education pathway programs that can be used to model the aforementioned career exploration statewide. Through such programs, high school students have the opportunity to earn dual credit, are exposed to education as a content area and are offered classes in child development and education. As a part of these education pathways programs, partnerships are created with local universities. For instance, Rockford Public Schools has partnered with Rockford University which, as an incentive, offers reduced tuition to students who have completed the program and wish to pursue a degree in education. Career exploration and workforce readiness of this sort

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<sup>18</sup> “Improving Teacher Preparation Policy and Programs: Building a High-Quality Teacher Workforce in the State of Illinois.” *Illinois.gov*.

could be easily embedded within a variety of initiatives within the state.<sup>19</sup>

- Provide support for culturally and linguistically diverse teachers to strengthen retention, especially of those who teach in more challenging schools. Retention strategies can include induction and mentoring programs, venues by which their opinions and ideas can be openly expressed and heard, and the creation of more intentional career ladders and varied roles for diverse teachers.

There is growing evidence that a representative teaching workforce has auspicious potential to help students of color reach greater levels of success. The presence of diverse teachers enhances academic outcomes and bolsters the likelihood of eventual college matriculation. “Diverse teachers might also influence instructional context, such as through the development of culturally relevant curricula and pedagogy and by introducing a topic from a perspective that students can relate to.”<sup>20</sup> A racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse teaching workforce provides students with multiple perspectives that allows them to gain a greater understanding of the world around them.

## OUTCOME

While it is true that a diverse teacher workforce poses a variety of benefits for diverse students, teachers alone cannot single-handedly close the achievement gap.<sup>21</sup> Effective and intentional strategies such as those previously listed can contribute to an increase in the number of diverse teachers in the early childhood education workforce. Documented academic benefits occur when students and teachers share the same race or ethnicity. In certain instances, these teachers act as “role models, mentors, advocates, or cultural translators” for their students. Specifically, one study found significant positive effects when Black and White students were taught by race-congruent teachers. The research also found that the performance levels of lower-performing Black and White students benefited from being assigned to teachers of their own race.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> “Improving Teacher Preparation Policy and Programs: Building a High-Quality Teacher Workforce in the State of Illinois,” 12

<sup>20</sup> Egalite, Anna J., and Brian Kisida. “The Many Ways Teacher Diversity May Benefit Students.” *Brookings*, Brookings, 15 Aug. 2017, [www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2016/08/19/the-many-ways-teacher-diversity-may-benefit-students/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2016/08/19/the-many-ways-teacher-diversity-may-benefit-students/).

<sup>21</sup> Villegas, Anna Maria, et al. “Closing the Racial/Ethnic Gap Between Students of Color and Their Teachers: An Elusive Goal.” *Montclair State University*, doi: 10.1080/10665684.2012.656541.

<sup>22</sup> Egalite, Anna J., and Brian Kisida. “The Many Ways Teacher Diversity may Benefit Students.” *Brookings*, Brookings, 15 Aug. 2017, [www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2016/08/19/the-many-ways-teacher-diversity-may-benefit-students/](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2016/08/19/the-many-ways-teacher-diversity-may-benefit-students/).

When more qualified teachers look like and represent the same racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds as the children in their classrooms, all students, and students of color in particular, stand to benefit from having these adult role models. This could lead to overall better academic preparation, more positive perceptions of the teaching field and interest in pursuing a teaching career, or, minimally, a college degree. This will prepare the foundation for a strong, homegrown mentoring program for future teachers, which will improve the diversity of the pipeline.

## NATALIE VESGA

### Latino Policy Forum

#### PROBLEM

There is a shortage of bilingual educators across early childhood education (ECE) programs in Illinois. Educators without the capacity to provide linguistically and culturally responsive learning environments undermine the state's ability to ensure equitable quality services to immigrant families and their children. Due to various early learning stakeholders having noticed the shortage of bilingual teachers,<sup>1</sup> the Illinois Governor's Children's Cabinet made it a state priority to increase the number of bilingual educators.

State-funded Preschool For All programs require lead teachers to minimally have a Professional Educator License (PEL) with the ECE endorsement.<sup>2</sup> For those who serve Dual Language Learners (DLLs), the licensed teacher must also be endorsed in English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education depending on the concentration of DLLs in an attendance center.<sup>3</sup> In both school- and community-based preschool programs, there is a need for bilingual staff with an ECE endorsement to not only meet funding requirements, but also to meet the needs of an ever-growing, linguistically diverse population of young learners. Consequently, finding professionals with this level of education is a great challenge for the field.<sup>4</sup>

#### CAUSE

The shortage of a bilingual early childhood workforce is broad and complex. However, one key barrier falls under requisites for entry into teacher preparation programs. Current policy for entering a teacher preparation program includes passing one of the following standardized tests sanctioned by the state: Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), or American College Test (ACT). Independent analysis conducted by the Latino

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Main; Karen W. Yarbrough; Bethany Patten, "Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Hiring Survey: A Summary of Findings," October 31, 2017, [politics.ucsc.edu/undergraduate/chicago%20style%20guide.pdf](https://politics.ucsc.edu/undergraduate/chicago%20style%20guide.pdf)

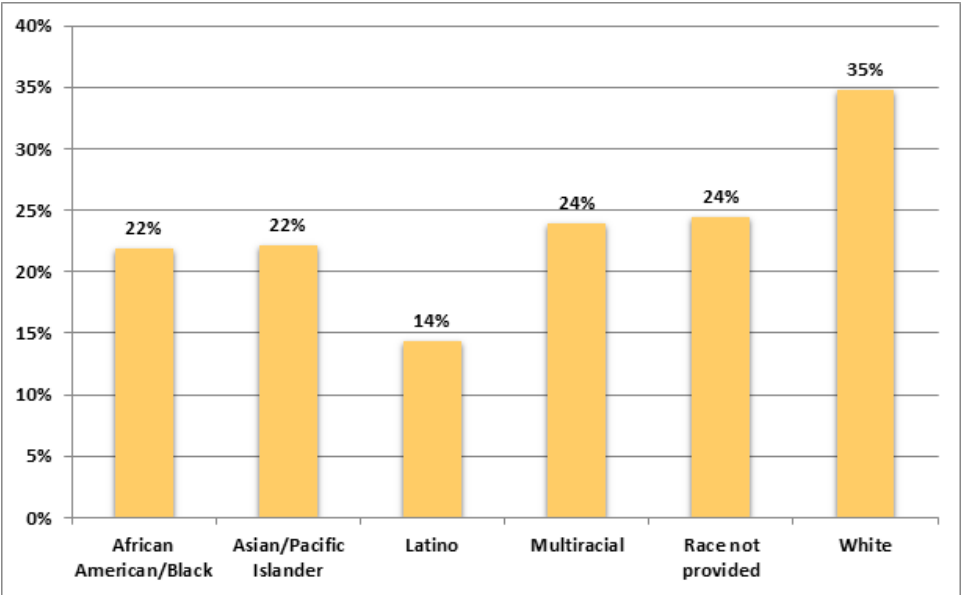
<sup>2</sup> Gudelia Lopez, "Delivering on the Promise: Leveraging the diversity of our early learning workforce to help Latino Teachers and preschoolers realize their promise and potential," (November 2017)

<sup>3</sup> Illinois State Board of Education, "Federal Rules and Regulations," Division of English Language Learning, [www.isbe.net/Documents/el-rules-regs-pres1508.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/el-rules-regs-pres1508.pdf)

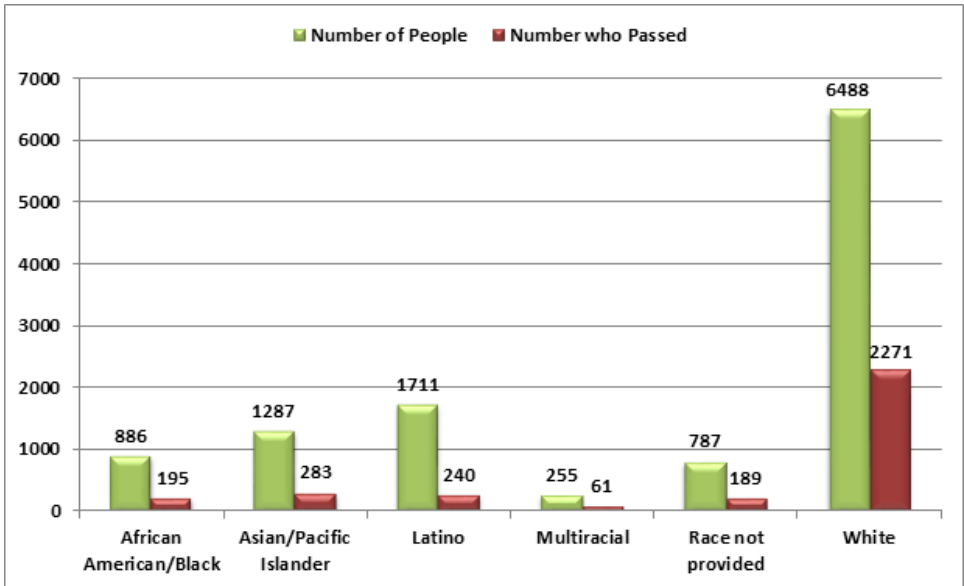
<sup>4</sup> Catherine Main; Karen W. Yarbrough; Bethany Patten, "Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Hiring Survey: A Summary of Findings," October 31, 2017, [politics.ucsc.edu/undergraduate/chicago%20style%20guide.pdf](https://politics.ucsc.edu/undergraduate/chicago%20style%20guide.pdf)

Policy Forum indicates that a diverse array of candidates try to enter the teaching profession, however passing the TAP proves to be an insurmountable barrier.

While TAP data does not provide information on whether a candidate is bilingual, Latino candidates who do not pass the test may represent a potential pool of bilingual teacher candidates for the field. As illustrated in Chart 1, only one-third of all candidates from 2015-2017 pass the exam on the first try, with distinct and varying rates for each racial/ethnic group. Chart 2 shows the actual number of candidates who attempted the test and failed compared to those who passed.



**Chart #1: 2015 – 2017 Percentage of Teacher Candidates Who Passed TAP by Race**



**Chart #2: 2015 – 2017 Number of Teacher Candidates Who Attempted and Passed TAP**

The data validate that there are diverse candidates interested in entering the teaching field. However, the TAP is a proven barrier preventing many from entering teacher preparation programs.

## SOLUTION

The question remains: Is a test of basic skills empirically linked to teacher performance? A growing body of research shows that traditional testing of basic skills for aspiring teachers does not correlate to being a successful and effective teacher in the classroom.<sup>5</sup> Instead, consideration of college grade point average (GPA) and collecting samples of student instruction in the classroom proves to be a more reliable way of gauging whether educators are prepared to teach.<sup>6</sup>

In order to increase the pool of PEL teachers with the ECE and bilingual/ESL endorsements, the Latino Policy Forum and the Ounce of Prevention Fund collaborated to develop workforce recommendations to increase the diversity in the educator pipeline. The specific recommendation regarding teacher entry is as follows:

<sup>5</sup> Linda Darling-Hammond, *Getting Teacher Evaluation Right* (Teacher College Press, 2013).

J.D. Angrist & J. Guryan, (2007) *Does teacher testing raise teacher quality? Evidence from state certification requirements*. Princeton, NJ: Education Research Section, Princeton University

Richard Buddin & Gema Zamarro (2008) *Teacher Quality, Teacher Licensure Tests, and Student Achievement*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation

<sup>6</sup> Darling-Hammond, *Getting Teacher Evaluation Right*, 27



**Recommendation:** The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) must broaden options for demonstrating proficiency at college-level coursework and meeting entry requirements into teacher preparation programs, allowing more candidates to take coursework leading to a credential, degree, teaching license, and specialized endorsements.

- The Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) is a significant barrier that eliminates many qualified and diverse candidates. Less than one-third of test-takers across candidate demographics pass all four sections of the TAP on the first attempt.
- Current ISBE TAP alternatives include passing the SAT, or Act Plus Writing, and applicable content area test(s).

**Action Steps:**

- Waive the TAP if a candidate's GPA is 2.75 or above in college-level coursework earned at a regionally accredited institution; or if
- Candidates have already earned a bachelor's degree with a 2.75 GPA from an accredited institution.

The Illinois State Board of Education must expand the menu of options for teacher candidates by including a candidate's GPA in college-level coursework earned at a regionally accredited institution.

For children to experience equity and access to quality care and services, there needs to be educators who can speak to children and their families in a language they understand. Research shows that teachers with diverse linguistic, racial and cultural backgrounds not only contribute to narrowing the opportunity gap, but also have an array of academic and socio-emotional benefits that impact both students of color and White students.<sup>7</sup> For students of color, exposure to a diverse teaching workforce increases classroom participation, raises test scores, decreases absenteeism and dropout rates, significantly reduces misplacement into special education classes, and lowers the rate of suspension and expulsion.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, White teachers tend to have low retention rates when placed in schools with high numbers of diverse

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<sup>7</sup> Ana Maria Villegas; Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, "Diversifying the Teaching Workforce: An Examination of Major Arguments," *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education* v42, n3 (2010) 177

<sup>8</sup> Ana Maria Villegas; Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, "Diversifying the Teaching Workforce: An Examination of Major Arguments," 177-180

Gudelia Lopez, "Delivering on the Promise: Leveraging the diversity of our early learning workforce to help Latino Teachers and preschoolers realize their promise and potential," (November 2017)

students, whereas educators of color tend to demonstrate higher retention rates.<sup>9</sup> By increasing the pool of diverse educators, Illinois children can experience a plethora of academic and social benefits, while educational settings can benefit from less turnover.

## OUTCOME

Given the acute shortage of teacher candidates enrolled in teacher preparation programs, it is imperative that the state move beyond a single test score for determining candidate entry into colleges of education. The modification of entry requirements is an essential component to increasing the pool of diverse candidates in the teaching field.

As the link between basic skills exams and teacher performance is empirically ambiguous, Illinois must do more than rely on standardized exams to determine entry into programming. Broadening the menu of options available for determining entry allows a candidate to demonstrate, in varying ways, his/her ability to manage college-level coursework. Overall, expanding the diverse pipeline of teachers who are qualified to enter into teacher preparation programs stands to benefit the growing population of culturally and linguistically diverse learners, and addresses Illinois's priority to increase the number of bilingual educators.

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<sup>9</sup> Ana Maria Villegas; Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, "Diversifying the Teaching Workforce: An Examination of Major Arguments," 186

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# WORKFORCE: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

**JENNIFER ALEXANDER**

Metropolitan Family Services

## PROBLEM

Early learning professionals in center-based and home-based programs are not receiving on-going training to meet the needs of families experiencing trauma. It is critical for early education professionals to be trained and informed about trauma because they are typically the first to observe children on a regular basis outside of the home during a critical period of development.<sup>1</sup> Left unaddressed, children will increasingly enter school with trauma-related, social-emotional, developmental, cognitive and behavioral needs.

Exposure to potentially traumatic events is arguably more detrimental to young children because of the impact on brain development during sensitive periods when the brain is undergoing rapid development and differentiation. Disrupted development could result in a host of functional impairments in emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal domains.<sup>2</sup>

Early learning professionals are likely to encounter young children who have experienced some form of trauma. The trauma includes, but is not limited to, shootings, psychological maltreatment/neglect, sexual abuse, domestic violence in the home, homelessness, physical abuse, accidents, war, natural disasters, sudden loss of a parent/caregiver, and painful medical procedures. Children who have secure attachment (responsive caregivers, predictable routines, safe environments where they are encouraged to take risks) are learning to trust their emotions as well as understand the world around them.<sup>3</sup> When early learning professionals are not trained in identifying signs of trauma they are

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<sup>1</sup> Sorrel, B. (2015). Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma Gryphon House Publishing, Lewisville, North Carolina.

<sup>2</sup> Belsky J, de Haan M. Annual research review: Parenting and children's brain development: The end of the beginning (review), *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, and Allied Disciplines*, 2011, vol. 52 (pg. 409-428)

<sup>3</sup> Statman-Weil, K. (2015). Creating Trauma Sensitive Classrooms. *Young Children*, 70(2) 72-79.

likely to miss opportunities to form more secure attachment with the child, misinterpret their behavior, or fail to offer support to children.

Undiagnosed and unaddressed prolonged exposure to trauma often manifests as behavior problems resulting in young children being suspended or expelled from early learning programs. Preschool expulsions and suspensions cause young children to lose their educational placement or time in care and can directly undermine their access to quality educational opportunities.

Specifically, Black preschoolers are 3.6 times as likely to receive one or more suspensions in comparison to White peers. This is concerning bearing in mind Black children comprise only 19 percent of preschool enrollment, yet encompass 47 percent of preschoolers suspended one or more times.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, boys of color from communities with limited economic resources and high crime are exposed to trauma at an early age. Early learning professionals must be equipped to offer supports and resources to these children or there will continue to be a disproportionate representation of children of color experiencing disciplinary referrals and exclusionary practices.

## CAUSE

Current in-service trainings for early learning professionals do not adequately meet the needs of children exposed to incidents of trauma. A study conducted by CASEL revealed what states require teachers to know about Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for certification and what institutions of higher education actually teach.<sup>5</sup> Teacher certification and pre-service programs offer courses targeting Social Emotional Learning and provide teachers with strategies to address the social emotional needs of students. The current course content occurs during certification preparation and at pre-service. The content generally focuses on Self Awareness, Self-Management, Relationship Skills and Responsible Decision-Making. However, none of the content covers knowledge needed to handle a 3-year-old who witnessed a murder the night before school or how to identify a child who may be dealing with such stressors reflective of the daily realities of some families with limited economic resources. Course content specific to trauma-informed practices and teaching children exposed to trauma are not

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<sup>4</sup> Gilliam, W., Maupin, A., Reyes, C., Accavitti, M., Shic, F. (2016). *Do Early Educators' Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Race Relate Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Study Center.

<sup>5</sup> Schonert-Reichl, K.A., Kitil, J., Hanson-Peterson, J. (2017). *To Reach The Students, Teach The Teachers, A National Scan of Teacher Preparation and Social & Emotional Learning.* Vancouver, BC: A Report for CASEL [www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/SEL-TEd-Full-Report-for-CASEL-2017-02-14-R1.pdf](http://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/SEL-TEd-Full-Report-for-CASEL-2017-02-14-R1.pdf)

covered in current teacher preparation programs<sup>6</sup> and Head Start providers have a limited number of qualified mental health consultants available to support.

## SOLUTION

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) should partner with community agencies and mental health providers to develop policy requiring all DCFS licensed providers to complete on-going (monthly) trauma-informed practice training, and within 30 days of hiring for new staff members.

There is precedence for this addition because current Illinois daycare licensing standards mandate that all employees of DCFS licensed daycares complete annual mandated reporter training, inclusive of Child Abuse & Neglect identification, Shaken Baby Syndrome/Traumatic Brain Injury, Welcome Each Child (Diversity/Inclusion), Sudden Infant Death and CPR/First Aid trainings. There are also mandated federal/state quality indicator trainings related to health and safety, child development, and nutrition.

Teacher in-service training is just as critical as preparation for teacher certification and pre-service training.<sup>7</sup> Early learning professionals are spending significant hours, days and years with children. The needs of families experiencing multiple risk factors in underserved areas change daily. Therefore, on-going (monthly) trauma-informed in-service training, and within 30 days of hire is a solution to an ever-evolving problem faced by early learning professionals. In environments where trauma-informed practices are institutionalized and prioritized, individuals are trained to work with children to understand and identify the many signs and triggers of trauma. Professionals are also supported to prevent secondary traumatic stress.

Programs such as the Early Childhood Trauma Collaborative have partnered with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administrations (SAMHSA) to extend trauma-focused services to young children in Connecticut. The program's goals<sup>8</sup> are to:

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Gilliam, W., Maupin, A., Reyes, C., Accavitti, M., Shic, F. (2016). *Do Early Educators' Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Race Relate Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Study Center.

<sup>8</sup> "Improving Care for Young Children Experiencing Trauma", Early Childhood Trauma Collaborative (ECTC) [www.chdi.org/our-work/mental-health/evidence-based-practices/early-childhood-trauma-collaborative/](http://www.chdi.org/our-work/mental-health/evidence-based-practices/early-childhood-trauma-collaborative/)

1. Improve knowledge among the early childhood workforce about violence, abuse, and other forms of trauma, including how to identify young children and their families who may be experiencing traumatic stress.
2. Improve capacity to deliver community-based, trauma-focused services to children birth to age seven who are exposed to violence, abuse, and other forms of trauma.

Illinois has also developed the *Illinois Action Plan to Integrate Early Childhood Mental Health into Child- and Family-Serving Systems, Prenatal through Age Five*<sup>9</sup> to support the training of early learning professionals with tools necessary to meet the needs of children and families impacted by trauma. Implementation is currently underway with one of the explicit goals focusing on workforce training.

Early learning professionals often feel that they are not qualified to address the social-emotional issues of children exposed to trauma.<sup>10</sup> The effects of trauma are typically misdiagnosed as bad behavior as opposed to a mental health/social emotional need or cry for help.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the average turnover rate for early learning professionals in the U.S. was at 30 percent in 2012.<sup>12</sup> The most common reason for leaving was environmental and personal characteristics. Working in emotionally toxic environments only adds to the stress levels of teachers and children who are exposed to trauma. This is a critical factor to consider because approximately 26 percent of children in the U.S. witness or experience trauma before the age of four<sup>13</sup> and more than 80 percent of early trauma occurs at home and is perpetrated by children's parents.<sup>14</sup>

## OUTCOME

The long-term impact of offering consistent in-service professional development could result in:

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<sup>9</sup> [www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IllinoisReport2016.pdf](http://www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/IllinoisReport2016.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Sorrel, B. (2015). *Reaching and Teaching Children Exposed to Trauma* Gryphon House Publishing, Lewisville, North Carolina.

<sup>11</sup> Voisin, D. "Community Violence Produces Loud and Silent Trauma". *SSA Magazine* 24 (7): 25-29

<sup>12</sup> Porter, N. "High Turnover Among Early Childhood Educators in the United States," [www.childresearch.net/projects/eccec/2012\\_04.html](http://www.childresearch.net/projects/eccec/2012_04.html), (August 17, 2012)

<sup>13</sup> Briggs-Gowan, M.J., J.D. Ford, L. Fraleigh, K. McCarthy, & A.S. Carter. 2010. "Prevalence of Exposure to Potentially Traumatic Events in a Healthy Birth Cohort of Very Young Children in Northeastern United States." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 23 (6): 725-33

<sup>14</sup> HHS (US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau). 2013. *Child Maltreatment 2012*. Annual report. [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/file/cb/cm/2012.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/file/cb/cm/2012.pdf)

1. Improved teacher efficacy in identifying and assisting students and families in need or in crisis.
2. Greater teacher retention which could increase in continuity of relationships—an important factor in establishing secure and trusting relationships.
3. Increased safety and stability in the program environment, promoting learning and thriving children.
4. Increased ability for children to cope with trauma-related stressors and triggers, which offers children important strategies and coping mechanisms that later assist with problem-solving and conflict resolution skills.

# ROSALINDA ESPINOSA-NAVA

Gads Hill Center

## PROBLEM

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) requirements for obtaining a Professional Educator License (PEL) with an early childhood education endorsement must meet specific knowledge requirements and performance indicators around curriculum in core subjects, but with limited emphasis on social-emotional learning and development, which is critical to academic achievement. As a result, early childhood teachers are often ill prepared to support young children who have social-emotional challenges.

Compounded by inadequate preparedness in providing social-emotional supports, the field and children suffer consequences resulting from high teacher turnover, burn out, and expulsion of “problem” children. The passage of Public Act 100-0105 requires the Department of Children and Family Services to develop rules for preventing expulsion in day cares and preschools. To address this issue, early childhood programs are required to alternatively address the behavior by developing and implementing a plan to support the child in question. Developmentally, preschool-aged children are just learning to self-regulate and communicate with others.<sup>1</sup> Without appropriate support, children can be affected in various ways, including academic achievement.

Contemporary trauma research demonstrates that all types of trauma can undermine children’s abilities to learn, create healthy attachments, form supportive relationships, and follow classroom expectations. Children who experience trauma are two-and-a-half times more likely to fail a grade in school than their peers who have not lived through trauma. Children living with trauma score lower on standardized tests, have higher rates of suspension and expulsion, and are more likely to be placed in special education classrooms.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, trauma has negative behavioral, emotional, neurobiological, and development repercussions beyond children’s schooling and can carry into adult life.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=100-0105&GA=100](http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=100-0105&GA=100)

<sup>2</sup> Stataman-Wells, K. (2015) Creating Trauma Sensitive Classrooms. National Association for the Education of Young Children.



There are also racial implications for how this lack of training can materialize in practice. The U.S. Department of Education indicates significant disparities within this trend. African American children are only 19 percent of preschool enrollment; however, they make up 47 percent of preschoolers suspended more than once. Data reveal that African American boys and girls are more profoundly affected by preschool expulsion. In a national study, Dr. Walter Gilliam found that at least one preschooler was expelled per year in about 10 percent of state-funded pre-K programs.<sup>3</sup> The rate of expulsion was higher for African Americans and boys.<sup>4</sup>

## CAUSE

Once assigned to an early childhood classroom, teachers will likely encounter challenges on how to support a child with self-regulation and persevering through adversity. With the passage of Public Act 100-0105, the imperative is greater more so than ever for teacher preparation programs to integrate social-emotional competencies since more children will remain in classrooms due to the eradication of preschool expulsion and suspension. Yet, aside from a vague mention in ISBE standards, social-emotional learning and development is not prioritized in the requirements for obtaining a PEL.

As a critical component to social-emotional preparation, educators will need to explore their own racial biases and their influence in daily practice. To meet increasing quality expectations, appropriately support children and families, and respect cultural and linguistic identities, early childhood providers must reflect the diversity of the young child population and be skilled in developmentally appropriate practice that meets the needs of all children.

## SOLUTION

ISBE should finalize, widely disseminate, and monitor the use of the draft guidance document titled “Addressing the IL Social and Emotional Learning Standards in Educator Preparation Programs.”<sup>5</sup> As a result, licensure programs should sequence coursework in methods, theory and practice to develop knowledge and skills for supporting social-emotional development in young children. Additionally, Gateways to Opportunity could explore requiring a minimum of six hours of professional development focused on social-emotional

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<sup>3</sup> [www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/ExpulsionCompleteReport.pdf](http://www.fcd-us.org/assets/2016/04/ExpulsionCompleteReport.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>

[http://ziglercenter.yale.edu/publications/Preschool%20Implicit%20Bias%20Policy%20Brief\\_final\\_9\\_26\\_276766\\_5379.pdf](http://ziglercenter.yale.edu/publications/Preschool%20Implicit%20Bias%20Policy%20Brief_final_9_26_276766_5379.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [www.isbe.net/Documents/guidance-sel-appA.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/Documents/guidance-sel-appA.pdf)

development and practice techniques for teachers to obtain an Early Childhood Education level 5 or higher.

Integrating a social-emotional focus will align with the research establishing the first five years of life as critical for building a foundation of learning, health, and wellness for later success in school and life. Research further supports that the social-emotional development of young children is a central component of development.<sup>6</sup> Children's behavior is often a manifestation of how they are feeling and affected by their home life or social environment.<sup>7</sup> Children cannot be blamed for their surroundings, life style and exposure to external factors.

## OUTCOME

Dr. Kate Zinsser asserts: "Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that enable them to establish and maintain positive healthy relationships." Furthermore, positive social-emotional support increases academic achievement and positive social behavior while reducing their conduct problems and emotional distress.<sup>8</sup>

By having the adequate preparation, prospective teachers will enter the classroom better prepared with the knowledge, tools and dispositions to individualize and support children with social-emotional challenges. State and local policymakers should ensure all child care and early education workers and providers receive ongoing training in social-emotional strategies to ensure successful student outcomes.<sup>9</sup> Having the right tools on how to handle these social-emotional challenges will result in less burn out for teachers, academic success for the children, and continuous support for families.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/ccdf\\_acf\\_im\\_2015\\_01.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/ccdf_acf_im_2015_01.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> See footnote 1 for source

<sup>8</sup> Katherine M. Zinsser (2015), Recommendations for Implementation the New Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards to Affect Classroom Practices for Social and Emotional Learning, Volume 17 Number 1., [ecrp.uiuc.edu/v17n1/zinsser.html](http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v17n1/zinsser.html)

<sup>9</sup> Kimondo, Florence Ph.D (2017) Her Approach to Social Work: "Problems do not define the person." Retrieved from <https://50.erikson.edu/her-approach-to-social-work-problems-do-not-define-the-person/>

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# WORKFORCE: QUALITY AND PREPARATION

**SONJA ANTHONY**

ChildServ

## PROBLEM

Early childhood educators without Professional Educator Licenses (PEL), who work in center-based programs, receive limited to no mentoring for building effective practice resulting in children having less access to higher quality early care and education.

Other fields, such as health care, couple rigorous education and preparation with extensive mentoring through internships prior to professionals officially practicing in the field. On the contrary, early childhood's fragmented system leaves our most vulnerable population, who are in the most critical point in their development, with staff who lack proper educational support and mentoring necessary to be effective practitioners.

Furthermore, teachers who lack support traditionally leave the field.<sup>1</sup> According to the Childhood Workforce Hiring Summary, the teacher turnover rate is 27 percent within two years for teachers in center-based child care programs and 34 percent for teacher assistants within the same two-year period.<sup>2</sup> Other studies have identified varying reasons for turnover including salary, but lack of support is high on that list. Departing from the field during the most critical timeframe for brain development disrupts children's continuity of care, which is crucial for cultivating children's ability to bond and form relationships. Research cited in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce stated that "loving relationships with adult caregivers literally builds the architecture of children's brains."<sup>3</sup>

These relationships also form the foundation of the soft skills that employers are increasingly looking for in the current workforce. Nobel laureate James Heckman's economics of human potential provides evidence citing that skills

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<sup>1</sup> Why Are New Teachers Leaving? The Case for Beginning-Teacher Induction and Mentoring. Eaton, E., Sisson, Wendy. ICF International.

<sup>2</sup> Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Hiring Survey: A Summary of Findings. Main, C., Yarbrough, K., Patten, B.

<sup>3</sup> Workforce of Today, Workforce of Tomorrow: The Business Case for High Quality Childcare. US Chamber of Commerce Foundation Center for Education and Workforce.

acquired in infancy form the foundation for acquiring vital skills later in life.<sup>4</sup> These vital skills are referred to in the workforce field as “soft skills.” Soft skills are defined as “noncognitive, social-emotional and character skills” – those needed to work well with others, communicate effectively, problem solve, and follow through on commitments.<sup>5</sup> In a 2016 survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, almost 80 percent of employers identified these soft skills as most desirable hiring priorities. Another survey conducted in 2015 by the Wall Street Journal reports 90 percent of employers rating soft skills as equally or more important than technical skills and citing the challenge with recruiting staff with these skills.<sup>6</sup>

## CAUSE

Early childhood educators, especially those without PELs, have long been viewed as babysitters and not respected as professionals. As the field undergoes professionalization, more emphasis is placed on increasing education requirements of lead teachers in the classroom. Support staff often have minimal education requirements, receive less pay, and therefore are not seen as a vital component of the classroom, yet they have significant interaction with children and provide invaluable support to the teacher. Furthermore, teachers who have better-equipped support staff are able to focus more on planning, instruction and management, resulting in a more cohesive team that improves child outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

Current qualifications for teacher assistants in centers receiving subsidies from the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) include a high school diploma plus 15 hours of annual training. The 15 hours of training is not specific to the individual’s needs, but rather a formality that allows any qualified training to fulfill the requirement. Gateways to Opportunity data reveal that 60 percent of teacher assistants have a high school diploma with no college coursework.<sup>8</sup>

Gateways is also the credentialing system for early childhood professionals. Credentials are categorized into six levels of competency and based on seven content areas. The competencies are specific, measurable, and observable behaviors that demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected in various positions within the early childhood field. Competencies are not

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<sup>4</sup> Early Childhood Education: Quality and Access Pay off. Heckman, James, J.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 2 for source

<sup>6</sup> Workforce of Today, Workforce of Tomorrow: The Business Case for High Quality Childcare. US Chamber of Commerce Foundation Center for Education and Workforce.

<sup>7</sup> Learning to Mentor: Evidence and Observation as Tools in Learning to Teach. Stanulis, R., Ames, K. The Professional Educator, Vol. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Hiring Survey: A Summary of Findings. Main, C., Yarbrough, K., Patten, B

cumulative from level to level; rather, they are based on specific roles. While the concept is valid, the expectation for desired behavior is unrealistic because of the lack of training received by support staff.

Furthermore, much of the training is limited to webinars—a very passive way of learning that does not promote retention and application. This is especially problematic because a large percentage of teachers in early childhood programs have degrees in fields other than early childhood and a range of experiences.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is the licensing and monitoring body for all early care and education programs. Joint Commission on Administrative Rules (JCAR) Administrative Code Title 89, Part 407,100c requires all staff members to participate in 15 clock hours of in-service training per year. Required topics include mandated reporting, rules governing the operation of the facility, and legal protection afforded to persons who report violations of licensing standards without any mention of child development content. Optional in-service training may include, but is not limited to, child development, symptoms of common childhood illnesses, guidance and discipline, communication with parents, and hygiene. It is concerning that the same licensing body that has the authority to revoke operating licenses, does not mandate child development content and integrate it as a vital component to the success of the overall operation of early care and education programs.

Additionally, JCAR Title 23, Chapter 1, Part 65 supplies grants for a structured mentoring program for licensed educators in their first and second year of teaching. Ironically, nothing is allocated for unlicensed teachers and support staff who have the same level of interaction with children and less educational attainment. As a result, child outcomes could be undermined by ignoring the professional development needs of support teachers. According to the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, “care and education professionals need access to high-quality professional learning that supports them in acquisition and application of the competencies they need.”<sup>9</sup> Without structured and intentional teacher support, the quality of the programs can be adversely affected.

## SOLUTION

Structured mentoring programs should be established to provide the framework for the high-quality professional learning that is needed, not only for the lead

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<sup>9</sup> Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation. Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences Engineering Medicine

teachers, but also for the support staff who, oftentimes, need more support. Gateways to Opportunity credentialing system will provide the framework necessary to implement the sustainable mentoring program with oversight and enforcement from the Illinois DCFS licensing unit. Building on the current credentialing system, utilizing a pot of funds from nongovernmental and governmental entities, including the CCAP quality set-aside funds, will allow for more authentic assessment of the competencies and more sustainable and intentional pathways to advance through the credential levels.

James Heckman points out that “high-quality programs produce high-quality outcomes.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, one lever is implementing high-quality professional practice and learning to produce and sustain high-quality programs, yielding better child outcomes. To achieve this, it is imperative that structured mentoring programs are developed and access is extended to include non-PEL teachers and support staff, especially since children spend up to 10 times more hours in child care than elementary school.

Research has shown that the most effective form of professional development for teachers incorporates a structured, job-embedded mentoring and coaching program where they can receive feedback from colleagues and administrators as teaching itself is a learned skill that is developed over time. The Institute of Education Sciences referenced a 2012 MetLife Survey of American Teachers showing the benefits teachers experienced from professional development including collaboration time with fellow teachers, less feelings of isolation and a greater sense of confidence and job satisfaction. Another study referenced reported that students in schools where teacher-learning teams had a set of formal protocols for guiding meetings improved more than schools where there was no similar structure. In both these studies, professional learning was aligned around “job-embedded collaboration with a focus on student results.”<sup>11</sup> There are many pathways by which early childhood professionals enter the field, so there must be a comprehensive and collaborative approach to improve the professional development of professionals working with our youngest children.

Additionally, there are varying specialties in the early childhood field that range from birth to age eight within distinct environments from center-based to family child care. Certain characteristics of high-quality professional learning are consistent across these varied settings and include:

- intentional focus;

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<sup>10</sup> Early Childhood Education: Quality and Access Pay off. Heckman, James, J.

<sup>11</sup>Institute of Educational Sciences National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. REL Northwest 2010 – No. 095

- guided by the science of child development and context of cultural competency;
- ongoing with preparation experience and mentoring tailored to specific roles;
- coherent in the sequence of active professional learning, access and coordinated with respect to roles and settings;
- collaborative and interdisciplinary, providing shared opportunities across settings and age ranges;
- tied to practice through field experience and mentoring; and
- responsive to variations in experience, education and implementation barriers.

Implementation barriers experienced by professionals and organizations include affordability, accessibility and scheduling/time/logistic constraints. These can be alleviated by building resources into the system for scholarships, and tuition and fee reimbursement. There should also be subsidies for organizations to cover paid employee time away to participate in professional learning and assistance with accessing and paying qualified substitutes.

It is well overdue for a concerted and shared effort to grow our own practitioners by providing a more deliberate, sustainable, multi-phased framework grounded in best practice for adult learners. The current, highly-fragmented and flawed system preserves status quo. A commitment needs to be made on many levels, incorporating various governing and nongovernmental bodies to align systems and policies across all the early childhood birth to age eight programs and revamp the workforce landscape.

Collaborators should include governmental and nongovernmental entities, both legislative and enforcement bodies (i.e. IDCFS, ISBE, JCAR, IBHE) that can commit to pooling resources to address this type of high-quality professional practice. Existing models are available to learn from and build upon the framework set up by Gateways to Opportunity. This system can eliminate any duplication of efforts by providing the platform for all entities to work collaboratively to strengthen the infrastructure and develop one robust system, inclusive of a structured mentoring/coaching program, that works for all educators.

## OUTCOME

In the famous greeting of the Masai people of eastern Africa, “And how are the children,” it can be assumed that if the children are well, then the society is

doing well.<sup>12</sup> For the children to be well, they must have consistent, responsive adults who are knowledgeable about their growth and development. For this reason, it is vital that early childhood educators have access to structured mentoring/coaching to better equip them to be effective practitioners, resulting in children receiving higher quality care and education. For “it is through the quality work of these adults that the nation can make it right from the very beginning for its children,” according to groundbreaking report issued by the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/and-how-are-the-children](http://www.uua.org/worship/words/reading/and-how-are-the-children)

<sup>13</sup> Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation. Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences Engineering Medicine



## PROBLEM

There are many factors that contribute to students' academic success; however effective teacher practice is a key lever. Eighty percent of children enrolled in publicly-funded preschool programs (local, state, or federal) in Illinois attend center-based programs versus school-based programs.<sup>1</sup> While both settings require teachers to obtain the appropriate credentials and licenses, only school-based programs perform teacher evaluations that are validated to measure effective practice.

The absence of a validated measure of teacher effectiveness in center-based preschool programs contributes to a lack of evidence demonstrating the quality of the early childhood teaching workforce in non-school-based settings. Furthermore, the early childhood and K-12 systems use different language for accountability, effectiveness, and quality, thus contributing to different outcomes depending on setting and therefore limiting alignment between systems.

The K-12 education system requires annual teacher performance evaluations. Many Illinois school districts use a validated instrument, the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching (FfT), to measure teacher effectiveness along with student learning outcomes. While school administrators are required to be trained and certified in the use of the teacher evaluation tool, it is not a requirement for preschool center directors<sup>2</sup> to use the same evaluation tool in center-based preschool programs, adding to the chasm that already exists between the K-12 and early childhood systems. With no shared definition of accountability or measure of effectiveness, there is no evidence that children in center-based preschools are receiving a high-quality early childhood education experience, as there is no evidence that teachers are receiving the necessary feedback that will improve their teaching practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Children and Family Services, Title 89: Social Services, Chapter III: Department of Children and Family Services, Part 401 Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers, (2014, September 22). Retrieved from [www.illinois.gov/dcf/aboutus/notices/Documents/Rules\\_407.pdf](http://www.illinois.gov/dcf/aboutus/notices/Documents/Rules_407.pdf)

When effective instructional strategies are implemented and reinforced, studies show percentile gains of 29-45 points on standardized tests that measure student achievement in reading and math.<sup>3</sup> A study on the Cincinnati Public Schools concluded that students in classrooms with teachers being evaluated by trained evaluators performed an average of 4.5 percentile points higher in reading and math than students in classrooms where teachers were not being evaluated.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, racial equity considerations are illuminated through the following research findings:<sup>5</sup>

- Slightly more than 50 percent of the nations' inexperienced teachers are teaching in schools with a high concentration of children who qualify for free and reduced lunch; and
- African American children, Latino children and children living with limited economic resources are
  - less likely to be taught by the strongest teachers,
  - almost twice as likely to be taught by teachers showing less "value add," and
  - taught by teachers who do not have a track record of showing student academic and/or social-emotional gains.

Lastly, research shows African American children, Latino children and children living with limited economic resources benefit more from having a highly-effective teacher than their more advantaged peers, yet they do not have the same level of access to these highly-effective teachers.<sup>6</sup>

## CAUSE

There are many causes for this problem. Prior to the 2016 Head Start Performance Standards (HSPS), the focus in Head Start was on health, safety, environments, attendance, enrollment, getting at-risk children into programs,

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<sup>3</sup> Tucker, P., and Stronge, J.H. (2005). *Linking Teacher Evaluation and Student Learning*, Alexandria, VA: The Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, E. and Tyler, J. H., Can Teacher Evaluation Improve Teaching, (2012, Fall). Retrieved from [educationnext.org/can-teacher-evaluation-improve-teaching/](http://educationnext.org/can-teacher-evaluation-improve-teaching/).

<sup>5</sup> Dynarski, M., The Challenges of Promoting Equal Access to Quality Teachers (2014, October 2). Retrieved from [www.brookings.edu/research/the-challenges-of-promoting-equal-access-to-quality-teachers/](http://www.brookings.edu/research/the-challenges-of-promoting-equal-access-to-quality-teachers/); Center for Public Education, Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Research Review, (2005, November 1). Retrieved from [www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Teacher-quality-and-student-achievement-At-a-glance/Teacher-quality-and-student-achievement-Research-review.html](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Teacher-quality-and-student-achievement-At-a-glance/Teacher-quality-and-student-achievement-Research-review.html).

<sup>6</sup> Center for Public Education, Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: Research Review, (2005, November 1). Retrieved from [www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Teacher-quality-and-student-achievement-At-a-glance/Teacher-quality-and-student-achievement-Research-review.html](http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Staffingstudents/Teacher-quality-and-student-achievement-At-a-glance/Teacher-quality-and-student-achievement-Research-review.html).

and staff qualifications and credentials. More specifically, the focus has been on monitoring the inputs and compliance regulations of the Head Start program rather than program and student outcomes as well as teacher effectiveness.

With the new HSPS, there is an increased focus on quality, however, “quality” has not been defined in relation to teacher effectiveness. It is limited to meeting the standards and CLASS (Classroom Scoring Assessment System) scores. Although the CLASS is the first measure that is tied to long-term student outcomes, it only focuses on the interactions between teachers and students. While there is a correlation between high levels of effective interactions and student success, the CLASS does not evaluate individual teacher practice. It is limited to evaluating the interactions between the adults and the students within a specific classroom. Additionally, the CLASS is a tool that was designed to facilitate professional development, not teacher evaluation or the determination of individual teacher effectiveness.<sup>7</sup>

There are additional assessments that serve as monitoring tools to assure that Head Start Performance Standards are met:

- The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) measures quality of environments
- The Program Administration Scale (PAS) measures program effectiveness

There is also a list of credentials that preschool teachers must obtain to work with children, but nothing in place to assess the effectiveness of teacher practice. Other than meeting the list of educator licensing credentials, center-based preschool programs are not required to have teacher performance appraisals nor job descriptions (which often list some quality success indicators).

In Illinois, center-based preschool program directors do not have to meet the same stringent requirements that are needed to be a school-based director. If the preschool program is hosted in the school district, the director must be a school administrator or a school principal. The following table outlines the distinctions:

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<sup>7</sup> La Paro, K.M., Pianta, R. C., and Stuhlman, M. (2004). The Classroom Assessment Scoring System: Findings from the Prekindergarten year. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104 (5).

Center-based Preschool Director Requirements <sup>8</sup>	School-based Administrator/Principal Requirements <sup>9</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 21 years of age</li> <li>• High School Diploma or GED</li> </ul> <p><b>AND</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60 semester hours from an accredited university with 18 of those hours being in courses related to child care or child development</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two years of experience in a nursery school, kindergarten, or licensed day care center</li> <li>• 30 semester hours of college credits, with 10 of those hours being related to child care or child development</li> <li>• Proof of enrollment in an accredited college or university until two years of credit has been achieved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's Degree (the degree program must include a course in teacher evaluation)</li> <li>• Type 75 license or current Principal Endorsement</li> <li>• 40 hours of online training and certification testing in teacher evaluation (before performing any teacher performance appraisals)</li> </ul>

Because preschool center-based directors are not required to complete the 40 hours of online training and certification testing in teacher evaluation, they are not equipped to evaluate the quality or effectiveness of the teachers working in their centers with fidelity. This lack of fidelity in the use of the evaluation instrument can dilute (or even make inaccurate) the important information that should be provided to preschool teachers. The work of Walter Gilliam points out how quickly implicit bias can be developed by students, teachers, and administrators.<sup>10</sup> This means that administrators (or anyone evaluating Pre-K

<sup>8</sup> See footnote 2 for source

<sup>9</sup> Sartian, L., Stoelinga, S. R., Brown, E. R., Rethinking Teacher Evaluation in Chicago: Lessons Learned from Classroom Observations, Principal-Teacher Conferences, and District Implementation, Consortium on Chicago School Research, (2011, November). Retrieved from [www.danielsongroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Rethinking\\_Teacher\\_Evaluation\\_Chicago.pdf](http://www.danielsongroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Rethinking_Teacher_Evaluation_Chicago.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Gilliam, W. S., Maupin, A. N., Reyes, C. R., Accavitti, M., and Shic, F. Do Early Educators' Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Race Relate to Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions? Yale Child Study Center, (2016, September 28). Retrieved from: [www.addressingracialmicroaggressions.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Preschool-Implicit-Bias-Policy-Brief\\_final\\_9\\_26\\_276766\\_5379.pdf](http://www.addressingracialmicroaggressions.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Preschool-Implicit-Bias-Policy-Brief_final_9_26_276766_5379.pdf)

teachers) must be trained in using an evaluation tool that focuses on teacher behaviors in order to obtain an accurate understanding of a teacher's knowledge and instructional abilities and thereby eliminate any bias, thus assuring fidelity of the implementation and use of the evaluation tool.

## SOLUTION

In order to receive a Gold Rating in the Illinois ExceleRate Quality Rating System, all preschool teachers in center-based programs should be evaluated annually using Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching by a trained and certified evaluator. The use of this tool will both improve teacher effectiveness as well as provide measurable accountability for teachers, fitting perfectly into section 3C – Leadership and Management – Continuous Quality Improvement – of ExceleRate.

The work of Bill Sanders at the University of Tennessee showed that students who had three highly-effective teachers in successive years beginning in third grade were scoring on average in the 96<sup>th</sup> percentile on the Tennessee statewide assessment, and there is a tremendous body of brain research showing the need for high-quality early education.<sup>11</sup> Clearly, it is imperative to assure that our youngest children are in classrooms with highly effective teachers.

While many view teaching as an art, there have been empirical studies that document the complexity of teaching and have isolated certain skills and behaviors that are needed to be an effective educator. Most of this work started in the 1970s with Madeline Hunter, but has been continued by Thomas McGreal, Robert Marzano, and Charlotte Danielson. Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching is one of the most widely-used teacher evaluation frameworks across the country and is the basis of the teacher evaluation training for administrators across the state of Illinois. Numerous research studies have proven the tool as valid and reliable.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, all public-school administrators in Illinois must be proficient and certified in the use of this tool, which creates inter-rater reliability.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Sanders, W. L., and Rivers, J.C. (1996). *Cumulative and Residual Effect of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement* (Research Progress Report). Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Value-Added Teacher and Assessment Center.

<sup>12</sup> Sartian, L., Stoelinga, S. R., Brown, E. R., Rethinking Teacher Evaluation in Chicago: Lessons Learned from Classroom Observations, Principal-Teacher Conferences, and District Implementation, Consortium on Chicago School Research, (2011, November). Retrieved from [www.danielsongroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Rethinking\\_Teacher\\_Evaluation\\_Chicago.pdf](http://www.danielsongroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Rethinking_Teacher_Evaluation_Chicago.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Growth Through Learning, Illinois Performance Evaluation Frequently Asked Questions (2012, March 13). Retrieved from [www.isbe.net/Documents/pera-faqs.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/Documents/pera-faqs.pdf).

The tool dissects teaching into four domains: planning and preparation, environment, instruction, and professional responsibilities. Each domain is then divided into components and further divided into critical attributes. Teachers are rated on each of these components as unsatisfactory, basic, proficient or distinguished.<sup>14</sup> This framework has gone through many iterations, improving the tool, and making it easier for evaluators to identify the observable elements needed for teacher effectiveness.

In 2014, it was adapted for use with early childhood educators - preschool through second grade.<sup>15</sup> Following its adaptation, Illinois State University was commissioned to perform a reliability and validity study of the tool. After the two-year study concluded, the tool was published online. Training on its proper use began in 2017.<sup>16</sup>

## OUTCOME

“When children consistently have good teachers, they can make great strides. The benefits are especially strong for children from low-income communities. But when children are exposed to mediocre or poor instruction, the development and learning will suffer. When students miss out on effective teaching for three or more years in a row, their long-term academic prospects are jeopardized.<sup>17</sup> This happens all too often – especially to children from disadvantaged families and communities.”<sup>18</sup>

Strong, early educational experiences set children up to be curious problem-solvers, set them on a trajectory of life-long learning, and set them up to thrive in educational settings. Teacher evaluations are used to help teachers grow and improve or weed ineffective teachers out of the field. While the hope is for the former, in both cases the goal is to create the strongest possible teaching workforce.

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<sup>14</sup> Danielson, C., (2013) *The Framework for Teaching: Evaluation Instrument*. Princeton, NJ: The Danielson Group.

<sup>15</sup> Hood, L., Kasperski, D., Hunt, E., Danielson Framework with Early Learning Examples, Retrieved from [teec.illinoisstate.edu/observationprotocol/danielsonframeworkwithearlylearningexamples/](http://teec.illinoisstate.edu/observationprotocol/danielsonframeworkwithearlylearningexamples/).

<sup>16</sup> Hood, L., Kasperski, D., Hunt, E., DeStefano, L., Rodriguez, S. C., Garcia, G., and Kirchoff, A. Studying the Daniel Framework for Teaching in PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Classrooms, Center for Study of Educational Policy, (2015, September 21). Retrieved from [education.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/csep/Final\\_Danielson%20white%20paper.pdf](http://education.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/csep/Final_Danielson%20white%20paper.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Darling-Hammond, L., Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A Review of State Policy Evidence (2000, January 1). Retrieved from [epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/392/515](http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/392/515).

<sup>18</sup> Shore, R., PreK-3<sup>rd</sup>: Teacher Quality Matters, (2009, July). Retrieved from [www.fcd-us.org/prek-3rd-teacher-quality-matters/](http://www.fcd-us.org/prek-3rd-teacher-quality-matters/).

Using the Danielson Framework for Teaching in preschool will align the teacher evaluation system in Illinois from preschool through high school. This will serve as a step toward closing the birth to five/K-12 chasm with a streamlined system and a common language of quality, effectiveness, and accountability. It will also allow for the alignment of professional growth and development opportunities among all teachers across the state.

Credentials and monitoring checklists will no longer solely define effectiveness. Teacher effectiveness will now also be defined by a reliable and valid tool that focuses on the behaviors and practices of teachers.

By bringing fidelity to the tool through training, one of the unintended positive consequences of this policy will be that center directors move into a role of instructional leadership. The use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching will better equip directors with means to have reflective, professional development and instructional, practice-based growth conversations with teachers.

When all preschool teachers receive an annual performance evaluation using a reliable and valid tool to measure teacher performance and effectiveness, such as the Danielson tool, teachers needing improvement will now have those areas for growth identified, as well as suggestions and a plan for improvement going forward. Teachers unable to improve can be counseled out of the profession, thus ensuring the strongest and most effective teachers in ALL preschool classrooms across the state, resulting in every preschool child better positioned for success.

# LEAD COACHES

## ***IRETA GASNER***

Vice President, Illinois Policy, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Ireta provides leadership in the Ounce of Prevention Fund's (Ounce) legislative advocacy in Illinois and with the congressional delegation, as well as its outreach work to early childhood stakeholders and advocates around the state. Before the Ounce, Ireta provided direct services and administered programs for high-risk children and families for 14 years. She has been active in state and federal lobbying efforts with the National Association of Social Workers and RESULTS. Ireta received her master's degree in social work from the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois-Chicago.

## ***MADELYN JAMES***

Early Childhood Project Manager, Voices for Illinois Children

Madelyn is a passionate advocate for ensuring all children from birth to age 8 and their families have the necessary supports to achieve a strong foundation for future success. Her responsibility at Voices for Illinois Children (Voices) is to build an approach that advocates for supports that benefit the "whole child." Her first career was in business, where she honed negotiation, team building, management, budgeting, and strategic planning skills. Prior to joining Voices, She served in various capacities as a direct service provider, a Head Start and state preschool teacher, an Illinois STARNET trainer and project director, a supervisor of home visiting and center-based programs, director of the National Lekotek affiliates and early childhood training, a National Association for the Education of Young Children fellow, an adjunct faculty member with Chicago City Colleges, and as consultant and member of local, state, and national early childhood collaboratives. She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Bradley University and a master's degree in early childhood education from Dominican University in River Forest, Ill. She has two adult children and is grandmother to a beautiful baby named Illyana.



## **CATHERINE MAIN**

Senior Lecturer and Program Coordinator, College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago

Visiting Scholar, Early Investments Initiative, Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois

Cathy earned a bachelor's degree in finance and economics from Marquette University in 1987 and a master's of education degree in instructional leadership from University of Illinois at Chicago in 1992. She has more than 25 years of work on behalf of young children and their families in the state of Illinois. Her work at the UIC College of Education has included innovative and responsive program development and coordination in early childhood education. Cathy designed and developed a Blended Early Childhood/Early Childhood Special Education program and an Early Childhood Alternative Licensure program. Both programs were the first of their kind approved by the Illinois State Board of Education and both reflect a focused, much-needed response to specific demands for early childhood teachers in Chicago.

Cathy is also the principal investigator (PI) for the McCormick Foundation on an Early Childhood Workforce grant where she co-leads the Illinois team on the Innovation to Incubation project with the National Academy Medicine and the co-PI on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) Group Foundation grant, *Math Access for Teachers and Home Care Providers*.

She regularly presents her work at national conferences and as an invited speaker at local conferences. She serves on several advisory groups and boards including the Illinois Early Learning Council Program Standards and Quality Committee, the Chicago Community College Child Development & Human Services Program Advisory Board, and is a member of the Illinois Articulation Initiative Early Childhood panel. She is co-chair of the Illinois Higher Education Learning and Professional Development Work Group, president of the Illinois Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators and a member of the board for Chicago Youth Centers.

## **NANCY “SESSY” NYMAN**

Executive Director, EverThrive Illinois

Sessy joined EverThrive in March 2017 as executive director. She was previously the vice president for policy and strategic partnership at Illinois Action for Children (Iafc) where she worked in various capacities since 1999. Her work at Iafc included negotiating legislative outcomes and spearheading administrative advocacy to state agencies, managing statewide campaigns for policy change and increases in fiscal expenditures; and creating partnerships with community organizations, parents and faith-based initiatives to expand and deepen the legislative strength of Iafc. Under her leadership, grassroots membership expanded, leadership across the early childhood field developed, and the organization strengthened. Most importantly, Illinois’ early care and education program grew in the number of children served as well as in the state’s investment and focus on quality care for the most vulnerable children.

Prior to Iafc, Sessy worked as the director of the Violence Prevention Project for the Alliance for Logan Square Organizations where she created community collaborations with local stakeholders to implement violence prevention strategies. From 1990 to 1992, she was national coordinator for the Chicago-based Mozambique Support Network, a national network of state-affiliate organizations advocating for change in Southern Africa.

She has a master’s degree in cultural geography from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and a bachelor’s in government and international relations from the University of South Carolina. She is a 2006 alum of Leadership of Greater Chicago, board president of Lifeline Theater, and member of the Concordia Place Early Childhood program advisory board. She lives in Chicago’s Rogers Park community with her daughter, and their dog Webster.

## **ALLISON SCHUCK**

Managing Director, Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership

Alli is the managing director at Illinois Children’s Mental Health Partnership where she has worked since 2014. She has more than 10 years of experience in human services, which includes working with older adults, teen parents, young children, and adults involved in the criminal justice system. She has an appreciation for prevention and early intervention practices, and is invested in creating an environment for children and families to thrive in Illinois. Alli has a bachelor’s and master’s degree in social work and is a licensed social worker.

***SAMIR TANNA***

Assistant Director, Public Policy, Illinois Action for Children

For almost a decade, Samir has worked as a member of Illinois Action for Children's Public Policy and Advocacy Program where he advocates to advance legislative and administrative policies that support families, children, and early childhood education. He has an MBA in finance from Loyola University Chicago and a bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

***JACLYN VASQUEZ***

Associate Director, EDI, Erikson Institute

Jaclyn Vasquez is the associate director of the Early Development Instrument (EDI) pilot project at Erikson Institute. During her time at Erikson, she launched the EDI, a neighborhood measure that shows the development of young children within the context of their community. The long-range goals are to identify needs and strengths to promote equitable distribution and alignment of resources, and to foster better coordination across systems.

Prior to her work at Erikson, Jaclyn was the manager of the Child Parent Centers (CPC) of Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The CPC program is an early childhood preschool model that promotes aligned curriculum, intensive family supports and services, parent involvement and engagement, effective learning experiences and a professional development system for teachers. The program supports low-income children and their families from Pre-K through third grade.

While working for CPS, Jaclyn managed 19 Child Parent Centers, designed a Transitions program, and designed and presented professional development for teachers citywide in dramatic play, the Creative Curriculum, Bilingual Education, Special Education, Teaching Strategies Gold, Excelerate, Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Tools of the Mind, CLASS, and much more. Additionally, she supported the Ready to Learn enrollment process and the development of other preschool and parent programs citywide. Also a former early childhood educator of 15 years, she was the lead teacher for a Head Start preschool in the community of Brighton Park on the southwest side of Chicago. Before coming to Chicago, Jaclyn worked in Oak Park and Streator, Illinois. She has a master's of science degree from Northern Illinois University in literacy education. In addition, she holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education with an emphasis in special education, with dual endorsements in ESL and bilingual Spanish from Northern Illinois University.

### ***CHOUA VUE***

Director of Policy and Community Engagement, Illinois Action for Children

Choua currently serves as the director of policy and community engagement for Illinois Action for Children. In this position, she oversees the organization's early care and education policy priorities and community organizing campaigns to improve the lives of young children and families in Illinois. Additionally, she cultivates new advocates and strategic partnerships to strengthen the organization's influence on state and federal early care and education policies. She has an extensive history working for social justice issues including immigrant and refugee rights, education, and child welfare.

Choua earned a master's degree in public affairs from Princeton University and bachelors of arts degree from Carleton College.

### ***JOYCE WEINER***

Policy Manager, Illinois and National Policy Consultation Teams, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Joyce has been with the Ounce of Prevention Fund (Ounce) for 12 years. She has worked in educational, medical, and legal settings as a program developer, training director, and advocate on issues that impact the lives of young children and their families. Her work at the Ounce includes planning and partnering to implement educational and professional development systems that result in diverse, well-prepared teachers and administrators for the birth-to-eight workforce. Joyce holds a master's degree from the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago.

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