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## **Erikson Launches Illinois' First Triple Endorsement Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education**

*Goal to increase highly qualified teachers in divested communities*

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Erikson Institute, a graduate school in child development, has launched an innovative Master of Science in Early Childhood Education (MSECE) licensure program with a triple endorsement in early education, special education, and bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL). The first-of-its-kind master's program in Illinois aims to diversify the early childhood workforce while increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in divested communities.

This "triple endorsement" degree will uniquely prepare Erikson graduates to meet the diversity of today's learners. The three content areas woven together in Erikson's curriculum are typically learned separately. The innovative approach focuses on preparing teachers to understand children entering the classroom more holistically--including identifying their strengths and areas for growth and supporting early learners with multiple life experiences—and making sure that early childhood classrooms are ready to support every child rather than expecting children to have "kindergarten readiness."

"True to our social justice roots, Erikson's goal for our reimagined teacher licensure program is to get the best prepared teachers into the communities that need them most. This way, early childhood teachers can ensure that the brilliance of children who have historically been marginalized or come from disinvested communities continues to shine. These teachers will be able to truly and fully build on the strengths of every child, ensuring that they reach their full potential," says Erikson President Mariana Souto-Manning. "We are committed to strengthening the early childhood workforce and addressing systemic inequities that prevent all children from receiving the opportunity to thrive in preschool and school. Our program is for anyone interested in ensuring that young children can thrive, and for people who have a passion for early childhood education. Our generous financial support seeks to address the shortage of quality early childhood education professionals, and will allow a broader pool of candidates, particularly Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other candidates of color, to access certification, a high-quality program, and advance in their careers."

Across the state of Illinois, more than half of children in pre-kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade are Black or brown, ([Illinois Report Card](#)) and many have a home language other than English. Erikson graduates will be prepared to lead inclusive early childhood classrooms with a focus on building on the strengths of every student. Teachers need to be attuned to the cultural nature of child development, situated family dynamics, and the systemic forces that create barriers to accessing equitable opportunities for all young children to reach their full potential.

At the same time, we also know that teacher diversity in preschool and elementary school is crucial to Black and brown student success rates. Black students who had one Black teacher before third grade are 13% more likely to go to college. That figure jumps to 32% if they have two Black teachers. ([Education Week](#)). Eight out of 10 (81.3%) of teachers in Illinois are white. ([Illinois Report Card](#)).

Erikson will award “Educator Impact Grants” covering full tuition and certain fees for qualifying students who commit to teaching in a divested community for four years post-graduation, in nonprofit Illinois public, private or parochial preschool or elementary schools that receive federal Title I funds to address economic inequity or that serve families with limited access to income. Grant recipients are required to participate in a learning community for the first two years of their teaching career, which will provide strong faculty and peer support, along with professional development credits all teachers need to maintain their licensure.

To learn more about Erikson’s MSECE program, visit our [website](#). To interview an Erikson expert about the program, please contact Sheila Haennicke, Director of Communication, at [shaennicke@erikson.edu](mailto:shaennicke@erikson.edu), or 708.214.4933.

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

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