

# Preparing the Illinois Early Childhood Workforce: Lessons from a Study of Institutional Partnership Grants



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EDUCATION RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM  
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# Overview of Presentation



- **Early Childhood Workforce**
  - Christi Chadwick, (Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development)
- **Early Childhood Higher Education Grant Project**
  - Stephanie Bernoteit (Illinois Board of Higher Education)
- **2014-2015 Grantees: Early Implementation Study**
  - Brenda Klostermann (Illinois Education Research Council)
  - Eric Lichtenberger (Illinois Board of Higher Education)
- **Grant Partnership and Program Change Insights**
  - Cathy Main (University of Illinois at Chicago)

# Early Childhood Workforce in Illinois



The early childhood workforce in Illinois serves young children in a variety of settings, under a variety of conditions, with varying degrees and credentials, and receiving a vast range of compensation.

## Example: Teachers



Licensed Center:  
30 Sem hrs, (6 in  
ECE)

Head Start:  
50% of teachers have BA in  
ECE

Preschool for All:  
BA + ECE  
License/Endorsement

## Example: Assistants



Licensed Center:  
HS Diploma

Head Start:  
CDA or Associates Degree

Preschool for All:  
Paraprofessional certificate

# Early Childhood Workforce in Illinois



Strong push for all lead teachers to hold a Bachelor's degree in early childhood, and for States to develop clear, stackable education pathways toward the degree

- Recent Institute of Medicine report – “Transforming the Workforce” is being held as the “Blueprint” for EC for the next 10 years

However, our Registry data has shown us that for *licensed centers* ( $N \sim 32,00$ ):

- Less than 50% of teachers hold a Bachelors degree, and 20% hold no degree or certificate
- Less than 17% of assistant teachers hold a Bachelor's degree, and 64% hold no degree or certificate
- Significantly lower rates for those working with infants/toddlers and those in family child care

# Early Childhood Workforce in Illinois



Illinois has a system of stackable credentials for early childhood educators, ranging from 12 hours to a Bachelor's degree, with EC content

- Key for educators who often begin higher education with no clear plan for how far they will continue on the education pathway
- However, as student move along the pathway, they often face challenge articulating coursework from and among two and four year institutions
- Credentials seen as a unifying element to develop stronger systems across higher education institutions

# Goals of the EPPI Grant Initiative



- Develop models of effective early childhood educator preparation
- Foster partnership development between two- and four-year preparation programs and other community-based organizations
- Promote articulation
- Incorporate Gateways entitlement
- Support ECE programs is designing curriculum to incorporate new program requirements
- Build capacity in key areas of need (e.g., Bilingual/ESL, early math learning, special education)
- Create opportunities for innovation program implementation

# 2014-2015 Grant Process



- Partners included OECD, The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning, IBHE, ISBE, ICCB, HELP, and others
- First Round – 2014-2015
  - ◆ Applications from institutions across sectors and all regions of the state
  - ◆ Grantees include 35 institutions engaged in partnership – 12 public and private universities and 23 community colleges
  - ◆ \$545,000 in awards from RTT ELC funds – ranging from \$39,000 to \$48,000
  - ◆ February 2014 through January 2015

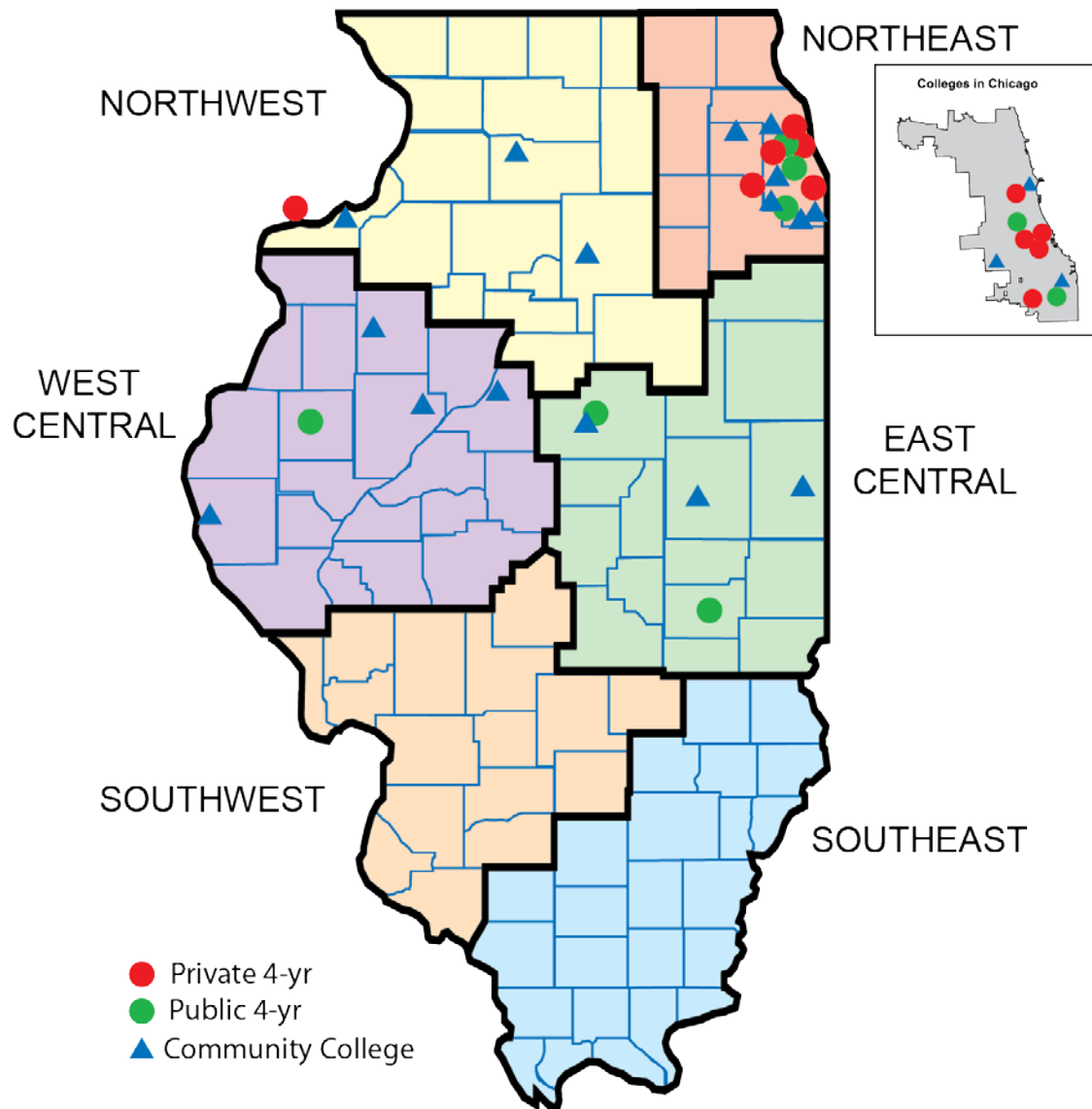


## 2014-2015 EPPI Grant Partnerships

35 institutions  
from across the  
state

12 public and  
private  
universities

23 community  
colleges





# Purposes of the Early Implementation Study



- Examine the initial implementation of proposed grant activities
- Identify barriers
- Identify catalysts
- Consider sustainability of the grants' impact

# IERC Methodology



- Systematically reviewed proposal narratives for each project
- Developed interview protocol
- Conducted the interviews
- Coded responses
- Analyzed responses for overarching themes and sub-topics as well as their relationship to partnership development theory (McQuaid, 2009)

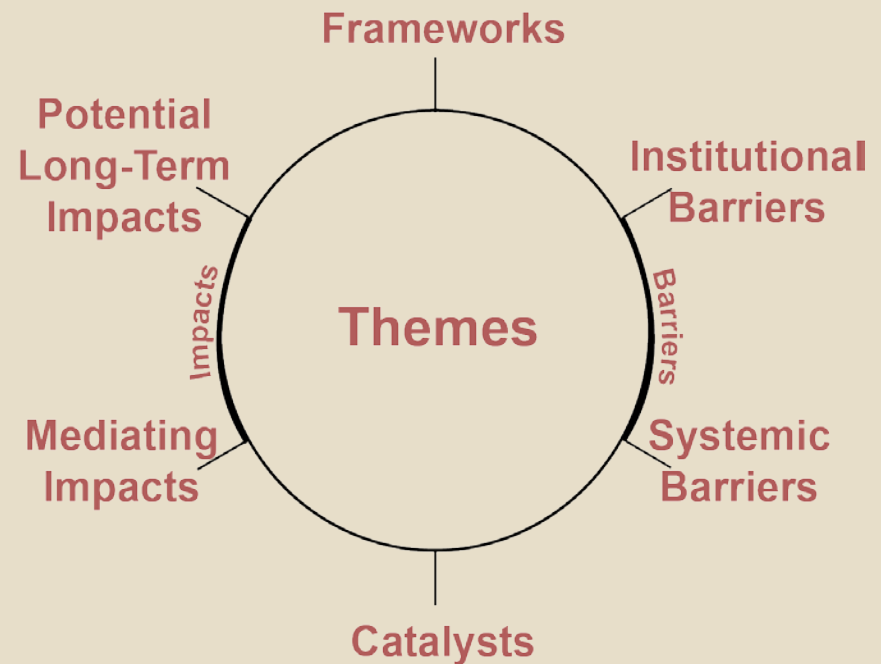
# Interview Questions



- **Focused on major goals and activities associated with each project**
  - ◆ Barriers to implementation
  - ◆ Catalysts and levers allowing for implementation
  - ◆ Innovations and enhancements to articulation
  - ◆ Program/curricular enhancements
  - ◆ Real and potential impacts
- **Partners' progress in the implementation process**
- **Ways in which new standards and program requirements were being met**
  - ◆ Articulation
  - ◆ Overall
- **Overall thoughts about the grant process**

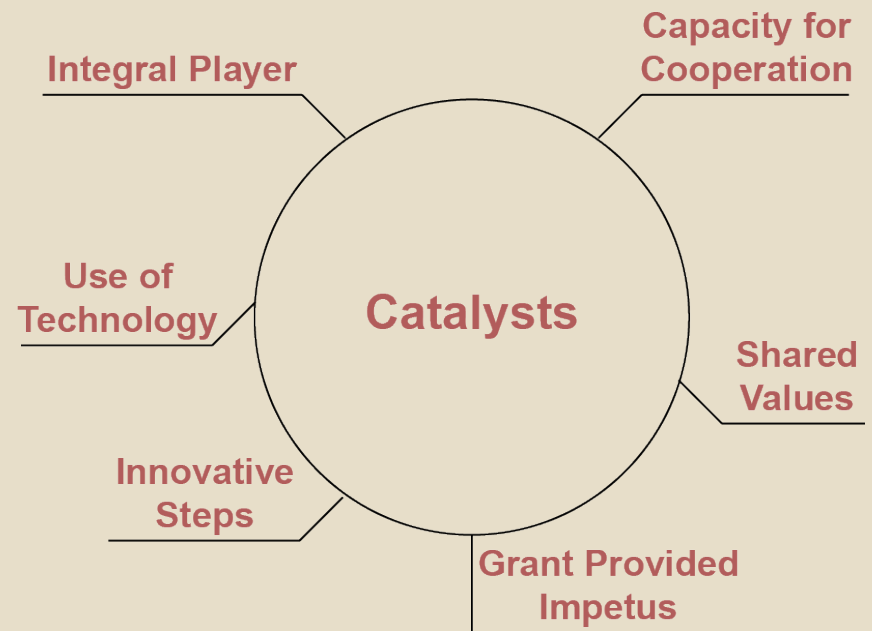
# Coding Structure for Responses

- Guided by interview protocol
- Overarching goals of the implementation project
- Each theme had between two and six sub-topics.



# Catalysts

- Provided movement towards goal attainment
- Many adopted from McQuaid's (2009)
- Often a response or reaction to a historical or contextual barrier



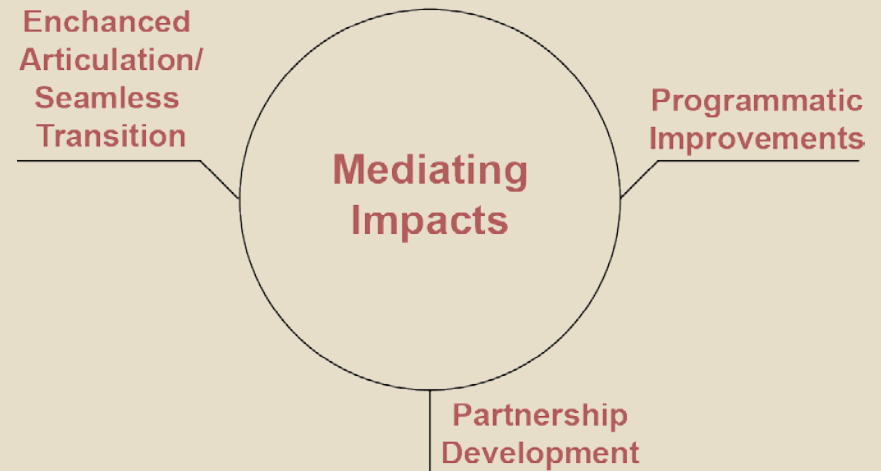
# Catalysts



- **Shared Values-** “Previously these discussions have been an institutional focus, now they are focused around the students.”
- **Capacity for Cooperation-** “The opportunity to meet face to face was great. Communicating with them via email is one thing, but gaining an understanding of them as people and knowing their teaching styles was extremely beneficial.”
- **Grant Provided Impetus-** “The grant was the ‘dike’ to hold off other responsibilities/commitments for a short time to focus on grant activities.”

# Mediating Impacts

- Already budding, direct result from grant
- Precursory in nature
- Framework for long-term impacts



# Major Findings



- Most of the partnerships were moving towards achieving their grant-related goals.
- The grants had a fairly large positive impact, particularly in terms of:
  - ♦ partnership development;
  - ♦ enhancing articulation pathways between the partners;
  - ♦ integration of the Gateways Credentials into programs and into the transfer process.
- Some of the themes and sub-topics identified from the interview responses were mirrored key ideas within partnership development theory, as described by McQuaid (2009).
- Identified barriers were often wedded to a catalyst



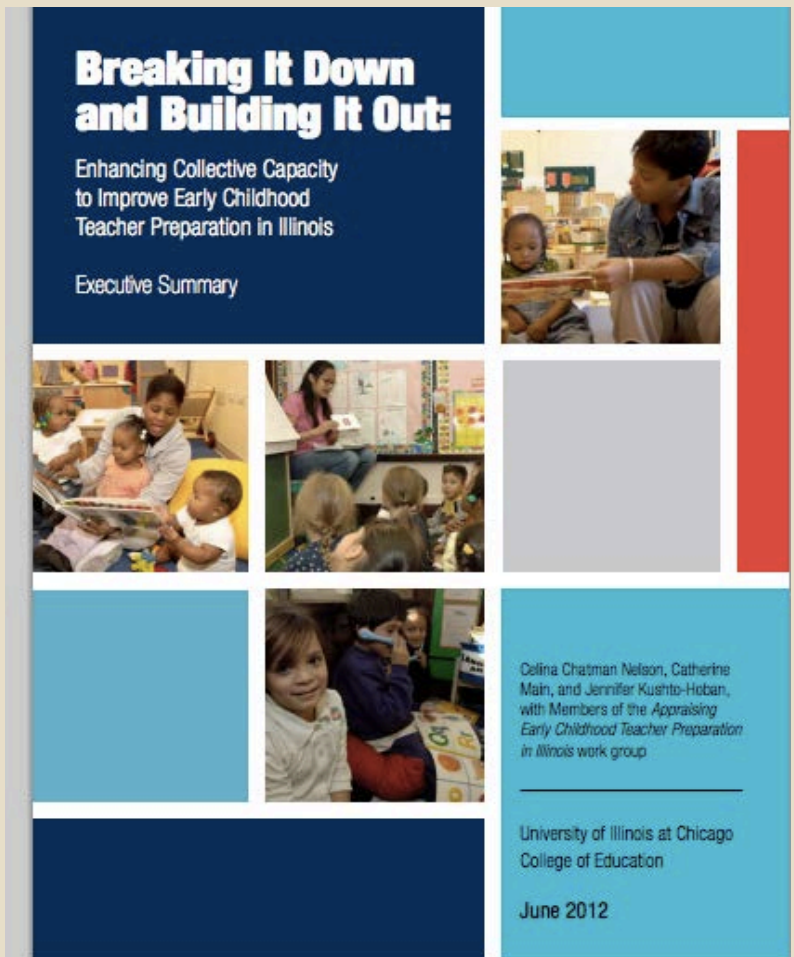
# Ideas for Enhancing Partnerships



- Frame discussions and goals using a student-centric approach.
- Include necessary players at the table.
- Rotate meeting sites, at times hold meetings in informal settings.
- Integrate community-based entities into the partnership.
- Increase within-institution communication
- Use technology to supplement traditional face-to-face meetings and enhance the flow of information between partners.

# Early Collaboration: Illinois Project on Early Childhood Teacher Preparation (AECTP)

- ◆ Provide multiple entry (e.g., pre-service and in-service) and exit (e.g., CDA, associate's, bachelor's, ece credential, Illinois licensure) points;
- ◆ Provide flexibility to attract high-quality students and support high-need students; and
- ◆ Build capacity to prepare teachers to work with children across the birth to 8 age range, in diverse settings.



Celina Chatman Nelson, Catherine Main, and Jennifer Kushto-Hoban, with Members of the Appraising Early Childhood Teacher Preparation in Illinois work group

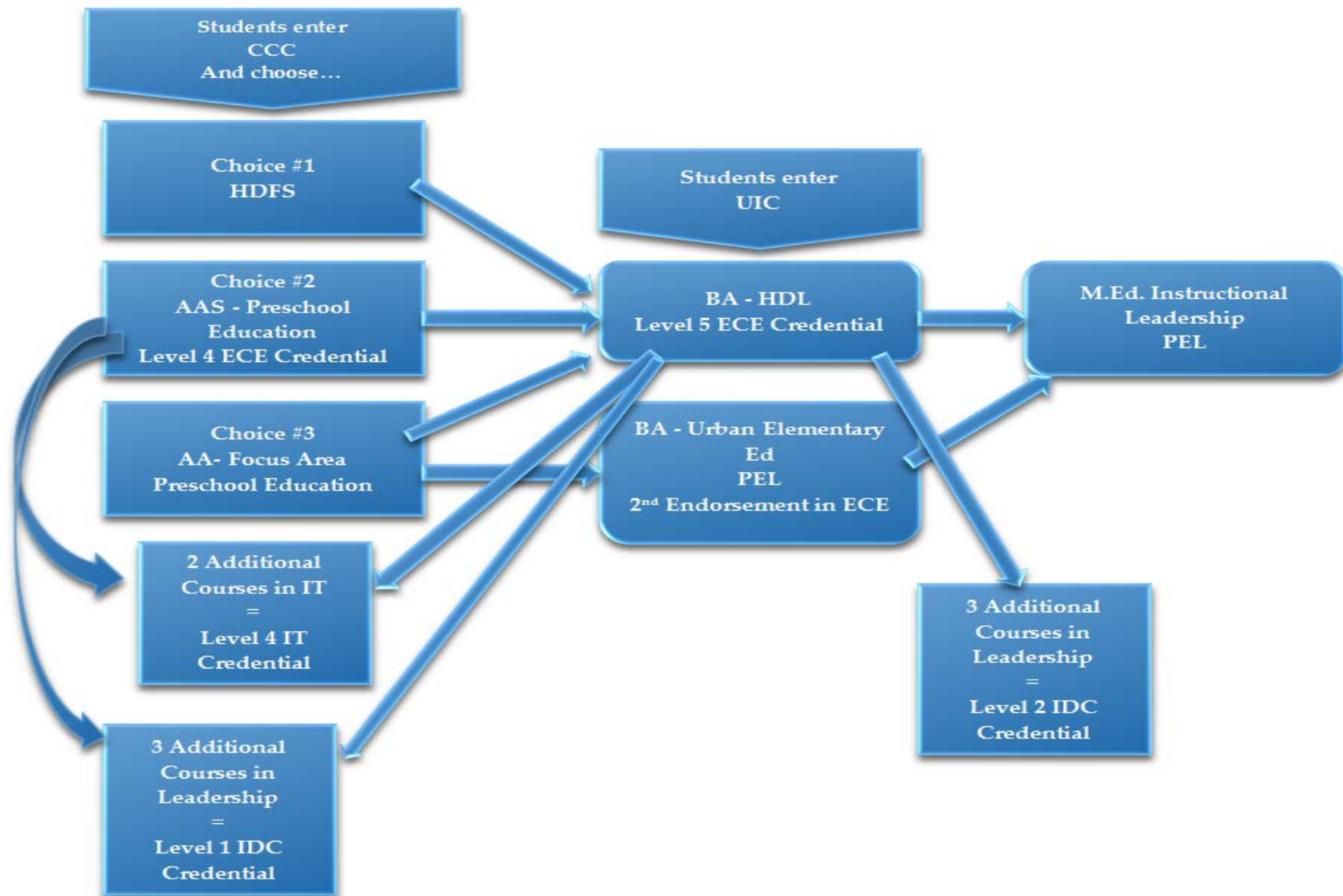
University of Illinois at Chicago  
College of Education

June 2012

# UIC/CCC EPPI Original Project Goals



- Map several paths to successful completion of the BA at UIC via the City Colleges of Chicago assuming a diverse pool of applicants with varying interests, strengths and challenges.
- Identify and/or design courses (if needed) that can be transferred from partner programs into UIC BA program.
- Identify and organize existing programs and initiatives at collaborating institutions to create a sustainable, data-driven student support network that provides transition planning, academic advising, academic and psychological support, and resource attainment guidance.
- Develop shared student materials regarding the support network and the logistics of transition attainment of degrees, credentials, and licensure.



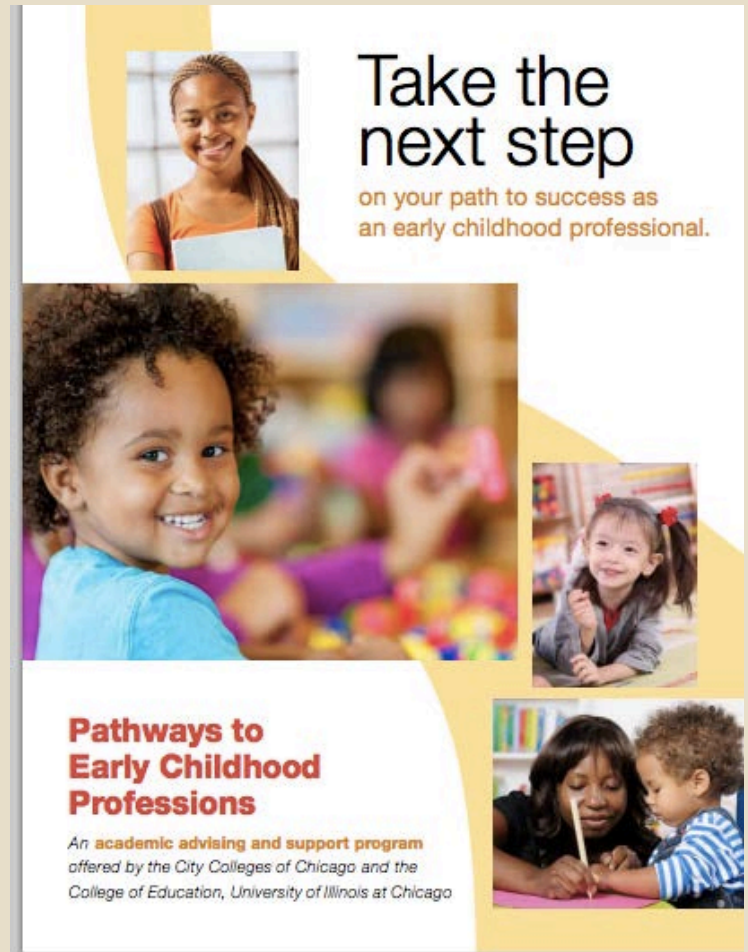
# Challenges Along the Way



- Learning one another's language
- “Newness” of UIC BA program in HDL
- Articulation agreements versus transfers
- Administrative barriers
  - Time turnarounds
  - Not always having the right players at the table
- Describing and mapping our vision

# Reality: Where We Are Now

- Completing alignment of all programs with with Il Gateways credentials
- Reviewing existing student support structures at all institutions
- Development of online courses
- Development of shared marketing materials (advising guides, website)



# Future Plans to Build On and Sustain Program Innovation Work



- *Data collection:* System development to include data collection on identification of students, program completion, program transfer, number and type of credentials entitled, use and effectiveness of support systems.
- *Student Recruitment Plan:* Develop a plan for dissemination of program information and early identification of students for transfer to four-year programs.
- *Course Delivery:* Development of multiple modalities for course delivery to better meet needs of students (e.g. online options, Saturday fast track session, etc.)
- *Model Practicum Site(s):* Identification and supports for model practicum sites shared across programs.
- *Competency Equivalency:* Investigation into models and program designs to consider work and life experiences.



# For More Information

## Online Report

*The Early Childhood Educator  
Preparation Program  
Innovation Grant: Lessons  
from Initial Implementation  
(Lichtenberger, Klostermann  
& Duffy, 2015)*

**[http://ierc.education/our-  
research/publications/](http://ierc.education/our-research/publications/)**

## Presenters

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