



Innovative Pathways to Degrees and Capacity-Building for Illinois' Early Childhood Workforce

Brenda Klostermann, Debra Baron,
Bradford White, Janet Holt, Dan Duffy

Mid-Western Educational Research Association
October 27, 2016

Mid-Western Educational Research Association

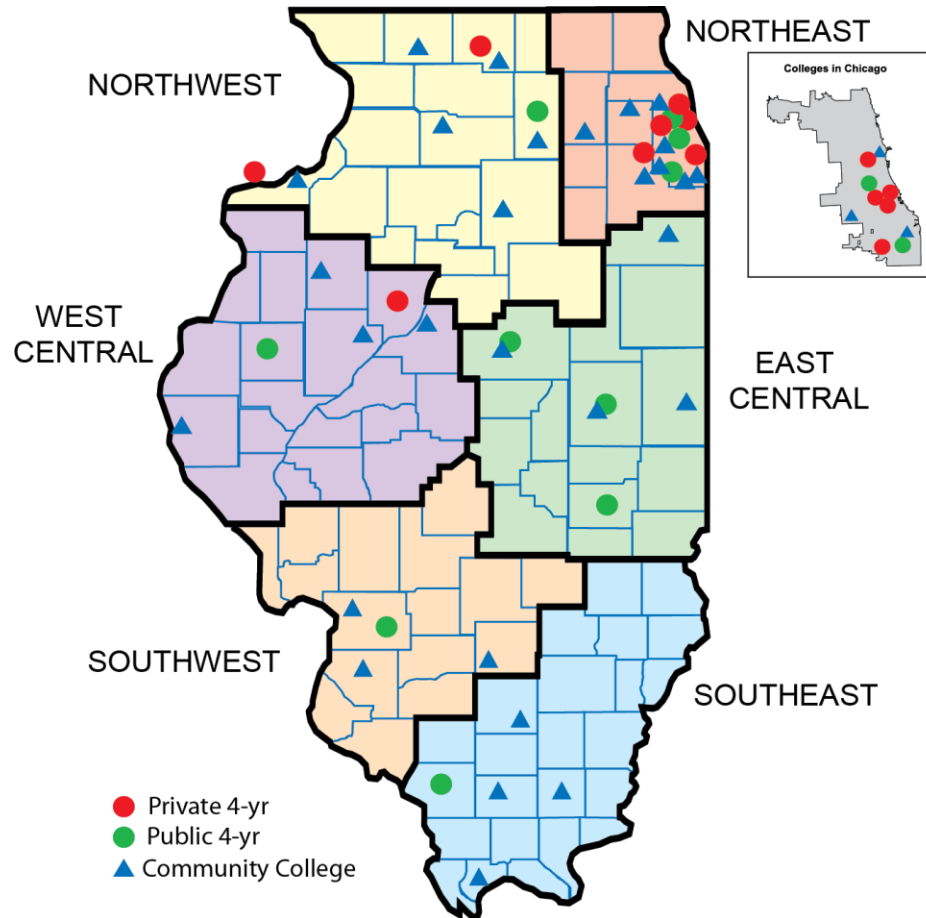
Goals of the Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) Grant Initiative

- 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 in 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

2014-2016 EPPI Grant Process

- Partners included OECD, The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning, IBHE, ISBE, ICCB, INCRRA, and others
- Cohorts in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016
 - Applications from institutions across sectors and all regions of the state
 - Grantees include 20 partnerships of two- and four-year institutions, representing 70% of state's ECE programs
 - All awards \$50,000 or less
 - Grant periods of approximately 10 months

2014-15 & 2015-16 Partnerships



Qualitative Implementation Study

- Identify innovative and promising initiatives coming out of the 2- and 4-year institutional partnerships to develop ECE preparation models and to build capacity in key areas of need:
 - Flexible pathways for degree/credential attainment
 - Aligning assessments
 - Supporting & advising transfer students
 - Improving quality field experiences
 - Teaching early math
 - Working with English language learners
 - Developing infant and toddler programs

Study Goals

- Using a case-study approach, examine the innovative and promising practices implemented by the grantees
- Determine what progress the EPPI grant recipients are making, with particular attention to partnership activities
- Determine challenges and strategies used to overcome them
- Establish policy recommendations for promising practices for future early childhood partnerships

Participants

- Each 4yr principal investigator was invited to be interviewed
 - 16 of 20 responded
 - Asked for at least 1 additional member to interview
- Participants
 - 33 individuals from 17 separate partnerships
 - 16 = PIs from 4yr
 - 16 = partners from 2yr
 - 1 = community agency
 - 7 partnerships from public institutions; 10 from non-public institutions

Methodology

- Reviewed proposal narratives and project artifacts
- Conducted semi-structured interviews (50-90 minutes)
 - Brief description of major activities
 - Catalysts, barriers, strategies
 - Tailored questions to match innovation
 - Core components needed for success
 - Sustainability of grant activities
 - Policy and practice implications
- Summarized and reviewed for accuracy
- Coded analyzed interviews to identify overarching themes

Catalysts & Motivations

- **Change in the status quo** between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education
 - Increase in the number of students attending community colleges
 - Demand in the field for bachelor's degree and EC credentials, but not necessarily a professional educator license
 - To meet the interests of the current workforce
- Adoption of the new **Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, state mandates** regarding redesign of teacher preparation programs, and the increased demand for **Gateways credentials**
 - Provided not only the motivation, but also the *structure* for innovations.
- Opportunity to **address moral concerns** by preventing retaking courses and to address the related costs, lost time, and negative energy experienced by transfer students.

Innovation Highlights

- Flexibility of the EPPI grants encouraged the partnerships to work around the difficulties with articulation and to **overcome existing “brick walls”**
- **New pathways** intended to address many of the prior difficulties faced by students who obtained an AAS degree and then decided that they wanted to go on for a bachelor’s degree.
 - New transfer agreements, cross advising, and bridge programs
- Through participation in EPPI project meetings and related communication, many participants became aware of how to take better advantage of **statewide initiatives** aimed at improving transfer options
 - iTransfer initiative, particularly Transferology and the Illinois Articulation Initiative

Critical Components

- Learning about each other's programs
- Involving other faculty, administrators, advising personnel, community partners, and other stakeholders early and throughout the process
- Acknowledging that the need to make modifications goes both ways between 2yr and 4yr programs
- Incorporating common credentialing requirements and learning standards
- Taking advantage of resources developed by others
- Drafting formal agreements

Articulation Innovations

- Intentional continuums – beginning in high school through graduate school
- New ECE specific 2 + 2 articulation agreements
- New non-licensure programs – with Infant/Toddler and/or Center Director focus
- Holistic AAS transfer
- Cohort bridge program
- Leveling bridge program

Alignment of Assessments Innovations

- In an effort to align with the edTPA process, several partnerships have begun to:
 - Develop common assessments
 - Use the same software, e.g., LiveText, to house student portfolios that demonstrate the key competencies required
- Establish the Cross-Institutional Assessment System (CIAS), based on approximately 50 “uber competencies,” aimed at better aligning existing systems of higher education and the Gateways’ credentials to create a more seamless, stackable credentialing system
- Utilize similar documents and shared assignments
- Offer a “leveling bridge” course

Support & Advising Innovations

- Cross-advising in person in which 4-yr advisors & faculty go to community colleges to meet with students to discuss what they needed to do to transfer
- Advising sheets/guides incorporating the 2-yr and 4-yr programs, showing the entire 4-year continuum
- Bridge programs
- Improving access
 - Online courses
 - Part-time, evening and Saturday classes
 - Co-location of classes at the 2yr
 - Scholarships
 - Test of Academic Proficiency preparation

Field Experience Innovations

- Providing training and support for field placement mentor/coordinating teachers were identified by a number of partnerships as a means for:
 - Improving the quality of field experiences for pre-service teachers
 - Expanding the availability of placement sites with diverse early learners, particularly infants, toddlers, and dual language learners

Content Innovations

- Early math learning
 - Improvements focused on providing quality field experiences for pre-service teachers and PD for those already working in the field
- Bilingual/English language learning
 - Many 4-yr programs added an ESL/Bilingual endorsement to their ECE licensure degrees
 - Some 2-yr partners have begun to create lower level courses to prepare their students to be able to transfer into these programs
- Infants & Toddlers
 - In response to needs in the field, several 4-yr partners have begun to develop new programs that build upon those offered at the 2-yr institutions and do not include ISBE licensure requirements

Challenges

- Getting institutional approval for changes/articulation agreements
- Other institutional issues
- State requirements & accreditation issues
- Broader issues in the ECE field
- Funding to sustain changes, especially for cross-advising
- Time to do this work

Preliminary Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- Require 2yr -4yr partnerships during redesign process
- Provide resources to “buy-out” faculty time to work on partnership activities
- Establish state guidelines to reduce the variation in articulation and equivalency among institutions
- Adopt state policy guidelines to encourage increased collaboration/communication between EC programs and advising offices to improve the students’ transition
- Continue to provide opportunities for sharing knowledge and experience among grantees and other interested institutions



Illinois Education Research Council

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

Janet Holt, Executive Director

janholt@siue.edu

<http://ierc.education>



@IERC_SIUE