Voices from the Field

Collaborative Innovations

in Early Childhood Educator Preparation

Edited by
Stephanie A. Bernoteit
Johnna C. Darragh Ernst
Nancy I. Latham

Voices from the Field

Voices from the Field:
Collaborative Innovations in Early Childhood Educator Preparation

Editors:
Stephanie A. Bernoteit
Johnna C. Darragh Ernst
Nancy I. Latham

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Advancing the Illinois Early Childhood Education Workforce Through Stackable Credentials Embedded in Degrees

Stephanie A. Bernoteit, Johnna C. Darragh Ernst, and Nancy I. Latham

Key Words: credentials, degree completion, partner engagement, pathways, stackable credentials, teacher licensure, transfer, workforce development

Overview

This monograph presents the perspectives of Illinois higher education faculty in early childhood educator preparation programs, 2014-2016, as they navigated a variety of changing state and national contexts to create partnerships and programs to support the education and credentialing of the state's early childhood workforce. The authors' collective voices provide important insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with designing and implementing programs for early childhood education (ECE) students, many of whom are working professionals in the field, with the goal of providing flexible pathways that support attainment of industry-recognized credentials aligned with associate and baccalaureate degrees. While instructive for the early childhood field itself, this monograph illustrates important lessons and promising strategies that may also promote degree and credential attainment for the broader arena of higher education.

Postsecondary Credential and Degree Attainment in Illinois

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), with its sister education agencies the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC), has long been engaged in work to promote the educational attainment and advancement of the state's young and working adult population. "The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success" (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2008) was adopted by the IBHE and outlined goals to ensure the affordability and availability of high-quality postsecondary credentials to further develop an educated citizenry that relies on a highly skilled workforce as well as meet the demands of our state and national economies. The "Public Agenda" is rooted in an overarching aim to have 60% of the state's adult population complete high-quality, industry-recognized credentials and degrees by the year 2025 (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2008).

In 2014, the IBHE commissioned a mid-way progress report which outlined both promising and sobering results; these are discussed next. While Illinois has made strides in growing the number of adults with 2- and 4-year degrees, currently 49% (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2016c, p. 9), our progress is not keeping pace with the national average (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2014). More recent data from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC) illuminates areas of strength from which to build; for example, compared to other states, Illinois institutions of higher education do well in supporting students to completion. This includes both full- and part-time, non-traditional students. "Over 87% of students who enrolled full-time at an Illinois public university completed a degree within six years [which is] seven percentage points higher than the national average . . . Illinois was first in the nation in completion rates for students who start part-time at public universities (46%) . . . and first in the nation for completion rates of adult learners at public universities (63%) . . . Illinois was third in the nation for full-time community college students completing bachelor degrees at 4-year colleges

. . . and eighth in the nation in terms of completion rates for adult learners at community colleges." (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2016b, p.1).

Despite advances Illinois has made in regard to degree completion and attainment, there are still marked opportunities for growth. For example, a heightened focus on supporting working adults, who are also students, to credential and degree completion—as well as sector- and region-specific strategies matching educational opportunities with employment trends—is needed in order to position Illinois to successfully reach the 60% by 2025 goal.

Postsecondary Credential and Degree Completion in Early Childhood Education

Completion of high-quality, industry-recognized credentials and degrees has become even more important in light of the Illinois labor market, where a projected 54% of all future jobs will require a minimum of a baccalaureate degree (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2016a, p. 10). Of particular importance in the field of early childhood education (ECE) are baccalaureate-prepared teachers who have specific competencies to support young children's development and learning during the critical period of birth through age 8. In 2015, The National Academy of Medicine (NAM) released a comprehensive report advocating for baccalaureate level teacher education in ECE. This report described the complex knowledge and skills that ECE professionals need in order to effectively support the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development occurring in the early years (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000). Further research (Bredekamp & Goffin, 2012; Minervino, 2014; Schilder, 2016) suggests there is a positive correlation between ECE credentialed staff, high-quality ECE programs, and child outcomes, particularly when ECE professionals have a baccalaureate degree with an ECE focus. Increased attention on the importance of well-educated, early childhood teachers (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000), as well as an anticipated growth of 14% in ECE careers and 17% for preschool teachers (Limardo, Sweeney, & Taylor, 2016; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014),

underscores the significance of the work being done in early childhood educator preparation programs.

Reports from the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity Registry of individuals working in licensed early care and education settings indicate that approximately 75% of early childhood teachers, 32% of assistants, and 85% of directors have degrees in some field, but many of these practitioners lack formal content knowledge specific to child development and early childhood education (Illinois Network of Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies, 2014). In addition, over 90% of early childhood practitioners in the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity Registry report having some college education, with the result that many have taken coursework without completing a degree or credential (Illinois Network of Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies, 2014). Despite the fact that many of these practitioners do not necessarily possess credentials or degrees within ECE, it must also be noted that Illinois experts working with staff in ECE settings find that these individuals often bring important strengths to their roles in working with families and children. These strengths include deep knowledge of local neighborhoods and communities, as well as cultural and linguistic competencies, all of which enable the ECE practitioners to create and sustain positive relations with the children and families they serve (Nelson, Main, & Kushto-Hoban, 2012).

Workforce Entry Requirements in Early Childhood Education in Illinois

Further complicating the early childhood field are widely varying requirements for employment. For instance, entry into the ECE workforce in Illinois is governed by several different agencies, each with their own administrative rules. These include the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), and Head Start under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Within licensed early childhood centers, for example, practitioners with 30 college semester hours (six of which are concentrated in early childhood) can be

employed as teachers. Those licensed centers that participate in ExceleRate, the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), exceed these employment requirements with targeted percentages of their teaching staff possessing credentials and degrees. National Head Start guidelines require 50% of teachers in funded programs to have a baccalaureate degree in child development, early childhood education or a related field, while our state's Preschool-for-All and kindergarten through third grade settings require that all teachers have a bachelor degree and an Illinois Professional Educator License (PEL) with an early childhood endorsement.

Requirements are similarly complicated for practitioners employed as assistant teachers. Individuals aspiring to be assistant teachers can work in licensed centers merely by having a high school diploma, while these individuals must hold a nationally recognized Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or an associate degree for the same role within Head Start programs. Within Preschool-for-All programs, assistant teachers must hold a paraprofessional certificate issued by ISBE (Nelson et al., 2012).

The varying requirements for ECE entry to employment create a number of disconnects, not only for the adults working in the field, but also for families navigating their way through various programs and transition points as their children move into new programs, and eventually, formal K-12 schooling. Adults seeking a career in ECE must often choose differing educational pathways and programs; these depending on their intended employment outcome. Those wishing to work with young children in Illinois' K-12 public schools need to seek a minimum of a baccalaureate degree leading to ISBE licensure. This pathway has a number of licensure-related "gates," including requirements for passing content area exams and program exit assessments that seem to have disparate impact on candidates from underrepresented groups (Nelson et al., 2012, pp. 31-32). In addition, individuals seeking employment in licensed child care or preschool settings may have a variety of coursework and program options, all of which are impacted by the wide-ranging entry requirements previously described.

Associated with these diverse pathways and requirements for employment is a long-standing issue of inadequate compensation, with much of the ECE field receiving wages that are far below minimum standards (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). The National Survey of Early Care and Education, which collected data from all 50 states and Washington, DC, found that early learning teachers and caregivers with a bachelor degree earned on average $14.70 per hour. These earnings are approximately half of the national earnings average overall for those with a Bachelor degree, which is $27 per hour (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). The lack of compensation parity is further exacerbated for those in ECE settings who teach infants and toddlers, regardless of their level of education. National data indicate that infant and toddler teachers earn approximately 70% of what teachers working with 3- to 5-year-olds earn (Whitebook, Austin, & Amanta, 2015). In Illinois, that translates into a median income of $11.25 for infant and toddler caregivers compared to $12.33 for preschool caregivers (Illinois Network of Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies, 2014).

These varied pathways for education and employment, as well as concomitant issues with compensation, contribute to persistent challenges regarding the qualifications of individuals in the ECE workforce. A feature of these conditions is the fact that Illinois has a large number of individuals in the ECE workforce who have completed some or even substantial amounts of college coursework without attaining the relevant ECE certificates or degrees signifying professional recognition of their efforts. The faculty voices represented in this monograph provide important perspectives and practical strategies for advancing the knowledge and skills of the Illinois ECE workforce by aligning systems to promote credential and degree attainment.

Illinois "Gateways to Opportunity" Credentials – A Unifying Framework for the ECE Workforce

Illinois began awarding leveled credentials in 2001, through the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Association (INCCRRA), the organization charged with administering the credentials. These industry-recognized credentials (now known as the Gateways Credentials) have been awarded in areas that include the ECE Credential, the Infant Toddler Credential (ITC), and the Illinois Director Credential (IDC). The purpose of these leveled credentials has been to provide a preparation and professional development "lattice" that encompasses the widely-ranging needs of practitioners in all ECE settings across the state—an aim advanced nationally as well (Limardo et al., 2016). As previously described, ECE practitioners serve in a variety of positions (i.e., teacher assistant, teacher, director, etc.) and are employed in a variety of ECE settings, including licensed centers, home child care centers, Head Start classrooms, public school Pre-K classrooms, and kindergarten through third grade classrooms. The Gateways credentialing system has provided a unifying bridge, not only between workforce positions, but also between licensed center employment requirements and early childhood professional educator licensure through ISBE to teach in public schools.

The current ECE Illinois workforce is comprised of practitioners, many of whom have attained a degree outside the field of ECE or have completed a range of college coursework relevant to ECE, often without attaining an associate or baccalaureate degree. The Gateways credentialing system allows practitioners to apply for the leveled credential that appropriately recognizes their current professional experience and provides a path to more specialized or advanced credentials based on further professional development, college coursework, and the attainment of degrees. The Gateways Credentials have further unified ECE professional development activities and college coursework across the state through agreed upon benchmarks of knowledge and skill to be demonstrated at different levels of credentials and areas of specialty.

Despite the variations in preparation and hiring requirements, the Gateways credentialing system has been instrumental in developing a more highly educated early childhood workforce in Illinois licensed childcare settings—71% with associate or baccalaureate degrees as compared to the national average of 53% (Illinois Network of Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies, 2014; Schilder, 2016, p. 11). The credentialing system has also resulted in a more informed hiring framework as the Gateways Credentials have been fully embedded in the State of Illinois' new Quality Rating and Improvement System for all early childhood programs. The impact of this substantive work is also reflected in the new ExceleRate standards, the inclusion of all Gateways Credentials in the proposed ISBE early childhood standards for licensed teachers, the considerable increase in institutional applications for entitlement status, and mostly in the substantial increase in awards for all three credentials: Early Childhood (ECE), Infant Toddler (ITC), and Illinois Director (IDC) in recent years. Since 2012 there has been a 67% increase in the number of institutions entitled for some level of the ECE credential.

Illinois Higher Education as a Partner in Developing the State's ECE Workforce

The challenge for early childhood educator preparation programs is assuring that practitioners have the competencies that they need, regardless of setting, and have access to seamless pathways that support their attainment of credentials and degrees. In 2012, a group of faculty and administrators from Illinois institutions of higher education conducted a thorough review of the complexities of the ECE field as these intersect with the state's higher education systems (Nelson et al., 2012). They produced a report that described many of the conditions noted in this chapter and provided important insights into challenges for higher education in recruiting and supporting candidates through the completion of credentials and degrees in early childhood. A number of higher education systems' issues were outlined, including program to program articulation and transfer issues, lack of capacity in ECE programs in regard to faculty and resources,

and disconnects between coursework and quality field experiences. These matters are mirrored in other national reports about the ECE field and higher education at large (LeMoine, 2008). The authors of the Illinois report made strong recommendations to "identify the points of intersection among . . . many and varied initiatives and leverage them to avoid duplication and hasten progress in improving young children's learning and development." (Nelson et al., 2012, p. 5). Cross-institutional partnerships and collaboration, according to this Illinois report, are essential to resolving systems issues.

Illinois Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation Grants

The response to this call for higher education partnership and collaboration (Nelson et al., 2012) was grounded in the state's larger systems-building work through the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge. In 2012 and 2013, the State of Illinois was awarded a total of $52.4 million in federal funds to strengthen the training and support of early learning personnel, create and implement the ExceleRate Illinois Quality Rating and Improvement System, and align all early care and education programs with high-quality early learning and development standards. As part of these systems-building and systems-integration initiatives, the IBHE led a project to provide grants to partnerships of 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education with the aim of improving early childhood educator preparation and pathways to promote attainment of credentials and degrees. These grants, called the Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grants, were designed with the collaboration and support of multiple agencies including the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), ISBE, The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD), INCCRRA, and the Illinois Early Learning Council's subcommittee on Higher Education Learning and Professional Development.

Applicants for the EPPI grants were required to use the funds to promote articulation and alignment of curriculum between 2- and 4-year

programs. Participating institutions that did not already have entitlement to offer coursework leading to Gateways Credentials were required to seek entitlement as a grant deliverable. In addition, applicants could focus on one or more key aims thereby providing institutional partners opportunities to frame their proposals in light of their specific contexts. Areas of priority for the EPPI grants included:

- Support early childhood educator preparation programs in designing curriculum to incorporate new state standards for professional educator licensure through ISBE, Gateways Credentials, as well as what young learners should know and be able to do;

- Build capacity in key areas of need, including but not limited to, early math learning, bilingual/English language learning, infant toddler development, and special education;

- Create opportunities for innovation in program implementation, including but not limited to, quality field experience placements, assessments to demonstrate candidate progress toward or attainment of key competencies, flexible pathways to further degree/credential attainment for the current workforce, and Gateways entitlement;

- Develop models of effective early childhood educator preparation; and

- Foster the creation or further development of partnerships between 2- and 4-year preparation programs, schools, preschools, childcare centers, and other early childhood settings for the purposes of improved educator preparation (Bernoteit, 2014).

The first EPPI grants were made available by application in the fall of 2013 for work to be done in 2014. This first cohort consisted of 12 partnerships. A second round of grants were awarded in 2015 for new eight new partnerships, as well as a group of continuing implementation awards to five partnership grantees from the 2014 cohort. Each of the EPPI grants was $50,000 or less with a grant period of approximately ten months. Over

the course of both award cycles, 70% of the state's institutions of higher education with early childhood educator preparation programs partici-pated in the EPPI grant initiative. Figure 1 and Table 1 provide the list of partnerships and institution locations.

Cook County
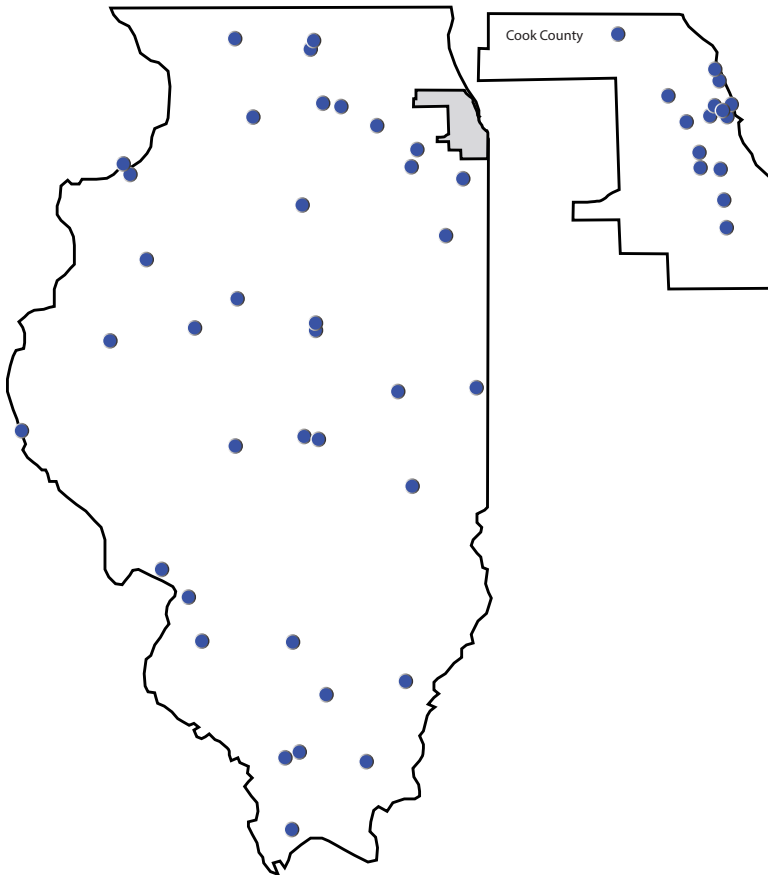
Figure 1. Location of the 2014–2016 Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grant recipients.

Table 1

2014–2016 Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation Grant Recipients

Four-Year Partner	Two-Year Partner(s)	Grant Years
Bradley University	Illinois Central College	2015–2016
Chicago State University*	Morton College* South Suburban College*	2014–2015
DePaul University*	City Colleges of Chicago - District Office* Prairie State College*	2014–2015
Eastern Illinois University	Parkland College Danville Area Community College	2014–2015
Governors State University	Prairie State College South Suburban College	2014–2015
Illinois State University	Heartland Community College Illinois Valley Community College Illinois Central College	2014–2015 2015–2016
Lewis University	Joliet Junior College Kankakee Community College Waubonsee Community College	2015–2016
Loyola University Chicago	City Colleges of Chicago - Harold Washington College	2014–2015 2015–2016
Millikin University	Lincoln Land Community College Richland Community College	2015–2016
National Louis University	Triton Community College	2014–2015
Northern Illinois University	College of DuPage Kishwaukee College Illinois Valley Community College Waubonsee Community College	2014–2015
Rockford University	Highland Community College Rock Valley College	2015–2016
Roosevelt University*	City Colleges of Chicago - Harold Washington College* William Rainey Harper Community College*	2014–2015 2015–2016
St. Ambrose University	Black Hawk College	2014–2015
St. Xavier University*	Moraine Valley Community College* City Colleges of Chicago - Richard J. Daley College*	2014–2015 2015–2016
Southern Illinois University (Carbondale)	Shawnee Community College Southeastern Illinois College John A. Logan College Rend Lake College	2015–2016
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	Lewis and Clark Community College Kaskaskia College Southwestern Illinois College	2015–2016

University of Illinois at Chicago	City Colleges of Chicago
	   - Harold Washington College
	   - Harry S. Truman College
		2014–2015
		2015–2016

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign	Parkland College	2015–2016
Western Illinois University	Illinois Valley Community College Illinois Central College Carl Sandburg College Black Hawk College John Wood Community College Sauk Valley Community College Spoon River College	2014–2015

* Members of the Chicago-area Consortium for Redesigning Early Childhood Education (CACRECE)

Research on the Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation Grants

Two studies, focused on the EPPI grant projects, preceded this monograph. The Illinois Board of Higher Education, along with partnering agencies and organizations supporting the EPPI grant initiative, sought to document the approaches used by partnering institutions in meeting grant goals. Researchers from the Illinois Education Research Council (IERC) were engaged to conduct a two-part study on the work of the grantees. The initial study (Lichtenberger, Klostermann, & Duffy, 2015) was conducted during the 2014 year as the first cohort of grantees began work. The researchers employed structured interviews of faculty and other involved participants to examine the ways in which institutions negotiated their partnership roles, relationships, and activities. Catalysts supporting their efforts, along with barriers and challenges, were highlighted.

A second study (White, Baron, Klostermann, & Duffy, 2016) was conducted as all grantees completed their projects and made plans for implementing the redesigned programs, new articulation agreements, and other related activities to support student attainment of credentials and degrees. A descriptive study, also grounded in interview data, *Innovations for High Quality, Aligned Early Childhood Educator Preparation* (White et al., 2016) provides key innovations and promising practices emerging from the work of grant partners. Five themes that were prominent in interviews with the educator preparation partners in this study were (a) the need to improve communication and alignment among institutions; (b) the emphasis on meeting the needs of the early childhood education candidates and the workforce; (c) the importance of improving ECE quality to ensure all children have access to high-quality instruction; (d) the vital role played by state and national policy initiatives and context; and (e) the importance of sharing resources and experiences across institutions for facilitating implementation and scalability.

Monograph Themes

From these two IERC studies, and the voices of the faculty leading their respective EPPI grant partnerships, three high level themes emerged. These themes provide a frame for categorizing innovative approaches to support the attainment of credentials and degrees by individuals working in the ECE field. Distinct, but also interrelated, these themes describe strategies for enhancing transfer pathways, partner engagement, and workforce development and serve as common navigation points among the EPPI grant partnerships, as well as higher education as a whole. The themes of transfer pathways, partner engagement, and workforce development, will frame the following chapters in the monograph.[1]

Transfer Pathways

One of the most notable challenges identified within the IERC's studies (Lichtenberger et al., 2015; White et al., 2016), as well as other key reports (LeMoine, 2008; Nelson et al., 2012) about the educational attainment of individuals working in the ECE field, is the issue of articulation. Articulation, and related transfer pathway supports, were pressing concerns, strongly voiced by faculty within the IERC study, and indeed, as primary aims of the EPPI grant projects. Many students might not be aware, initially, of the debilitating impact that the lack of strong articulation and transfer pathways can have on their ultimate success. However, it is impossible for higher education professionals to ignore the impact of absent or poorly implemented articulation policies on student attainment of credentials and degrees.

Low tuition and open-access missions support upward mobility and opportunity for many underserved students, who are disproportionately represented at community colleges. As of the fall of 2014, community college students comprised 45% of all U.S. undergraduates (Mullin, 2012). These underserved populations included low-income students, first generation college students, and racial and ethnic minorities (Jenkins & Fink, 2015). In Illinois, the "typical" community college student is 30 years old

---

[1] Although each partnership project could fall into multiple themes, it was categorized into the theme that was most prominent.

and married (Illinois Community College Board, 2016). Although community college students are often represented as needing significant remediation, it is important to recognize that community colleges represent an economical, vertical transfer pathway for academically advanced students as well. Research (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2016a) indicates that community college students who do transfer are as successful as traditional students.

Most students entering community colleges intend to attain a bachelor degree (Horn & Skomsvold, 2011). Despite this intention, only a quarter of community college students nationally transfer to 4-year institutions within five years (Community College Research Center, 2015). For those who do transfer, time to completion is directly related to courses transferred, i.e., using a nationally representative sample, it was found that the largest barrier for community college students to completing their bachelor degree was loss of credit upon transfer (Monaghan & Attewell, 2014).

The success of students who are transferring is directly related to the development of transfer elements. Key transfer elements identified as critical supports for student success by Smith (2010) include: statewide policy supporting transfer, cooperative agreements between institutions, transfer data reporting, incentives and rewards, a state articulation guide, a common core of courses, and common course numbering. Illinois has a number of these established transfer elements including statewide policies and practices supporting articulation, transfer data and reporting, and a state articulation system called the Illinois Articulation Initiative. Within the Illinois community college system, a common core of courses developed by ECE faculty and aligned with the Gateways Credentials do exist, but these courses are not adopted across all community colleges nor are they necessarily parallel to courses offered at the university level. While the state has experienced significant success in the area of articulation, strengthening and clarifying transfer pathways for students is an ongoing endeavor.

One of the goals of the EPPI grants was to provide 2- and 4-year institutions with an opportunity to develop or revise cooperative articulation agreements between and among institutions to support the transfer and,

ultimately, completion of credentials and degrees by students in the ECE field. The Transfer Pathways section of this monograph highlights the challenges some partnerships encountered in designing and implementing such articulation agreements, as well as the adaptive practices grant participants designed to create seamless pathways for students seeking credentialing for employment or further education toward more advanced degrees.

Partner Engagement

Partnerships within and across institutions, as well as the engagement of employers and other community stakeholders, may be at the heart of any of the work that undergirds support for students. Faculty and staff relationships are fundamental to the development of true partnership between and among institutions. These relationships serve as a critical catalyst and the initial glue that can bond institutional pathways and partnerships. However, it is essential that partnerships are maintainable. Sustainable partnerships should be grounded in well-developed, formalized policies and procedures that serve to guide the administration of programs and the support of students well beyond, and regardless of, the presence of a specific individual.

The 2015 IERC report employed the framework of partnership development theory (McQuaid, 2009) to analyze the approaches used by the EPPI grant partners to address historic barriers to cross-institutional work. The EPPI grantees noted that institutional biases about the hierarchical nature and roles of community colleges and universities were an impediment to equitable partnership, even playing out at times in the EPPI project (Lichtenberger et al., 2015, pp. 19-20). The Partner Engagement chapters of this monograph highlight the conscious efforts of EPPI grantees to identify and explicitly avoid the counterproductive effects of institutional bias. The faculty voices in Partner Engagement describe a variety of strategies used to build trust and mutual respect. Examples include having grant meetings at the campuses of each EPPI grant partner and providing time for all partners to share, in-depth, the details of their ECE program curricula and assessments. These approaches broadened EPPI grant conversations and planning from an institutional focus to a shared emphasis on students

(p. 21). This student focus highlighted shared values across institutions, deepening partner engagement, and undergirding faculty and staff relationships built through the EPPI grant project.

As faculty clarified their commonly held values and commitments to the students who move among their institutions, in order to attain credentials and degrees, EPPI grant partners were well-positioned to address relocation challenges faced by these shared students. Lack of uniformity in transfer decisions was a common barrier. Some partners had formalized transfer agreements many years ago, and these agreements had not been updated in light of changing requirements and redesigned programs. Other partners had no formalized articulation agreements for their ECE programs. Without current, formalized agreements in place, the processes to systematically support student transfer became less clear to students themselves, as well as to their advisors. All EPPI grant partners worked to revise or create cooperative agreements as an important structure for formalizing their partnerships. These articulation agreements were grounded in shared program redesign informed by National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) standards, ISBE standards for ECE programs, and the Gateways Credentials.

The Partner Engagement theme also highlights the value of connecting to the broader ECE community within a region. Faculty describe deliberate efforts to involve regional ECE employers and other community-based stakeholders in providing professional development and advancing the qualifications of the ECE workforce in their respective areas. EPPI grantees formed advisory boards and, in one case, a regional, cross-institutional consortium to more effectively engage in program redesign and concomitant strategies to support student completion in the region. Others focused on specific areas of need such as early math learning or the Project Approach (Helm & Katz, 2009) to frame their partner engagement efforts in support of learning outcomes for both ECE practitioners and young children.

Although a great deal of discourse in the partner engagement section is centered on cross-institution collaboration, there is a distinct focus on clarifying the student lens. Clarity in the student lens has, according to research,

a resounding impact on successful transfer (Soliz, 2015). The faculty voices in this section express the importance of maintaining a shared focus on the student lens as fundamental to meaningful partner engagement.

Workforce Development

Individuals aspiring to, or already working in, ECE settings are confronted with a wide array of options for advancing their knowledge and skills, not all of which lead to seamless pathways for future credentialing or degrees. Determining viable options for professional growth can be quite challenging, especially for individuals who are already working full-time or for whom English is not their first language (Nelson et al., 2012; Schilder, 2016, p. 14). Given the array of settings and employment requirements that make up the ECE landscape nationally, and specifically in Illinois, the DHHS Policy Statement of Early Childhood Career Pathways (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2016) calls for "state professional development systems [that] include career pathways as one of its components, helping early childhood educators advance from foundational training through more complex knowledge and practices and the possibility of different roles in the profession" (p. 3). The DHHS policy statement outlines a series of recommended state actions to provide workforce pathways for ECE professionals by promoting, "a coherent sequence of credentials that represent increasing educational attainment and demonstrated competency" (p. 11); "professional preparation and ongoing development [that is] competency-based" (p. 13); "career and academic advising and coaching" (p. 13); and "articulation agreements and credit for prior learning" (p. 15).

These DHHS recommendations mirror elements of the higher education agenda advocated by Complete College America (2014). Among the strategies for supporting student attainment of credentials and degrees is a focus on developing guided pathways to success (Complete College America, 2014). One particularly relevant application of the guided pathways in early childhood education is the need for developing whole programs of study, which represent a coherent academic major or program. In institutions offering early childhood courses, guided pathways would

require attention to a coherent sequence of courses for students leading to credentials that "stack" on one another and support possibilities for transfer to 2-year institutions from community colleges.

In both the 2015 and 2016 IERC reports on the EPPI grant initiative, researchers note grantees' efforts to create meaningful pathways for individuals entering the ECE workforce and continuing to advance their knowledge and skills. Many grantees, as part of their program redesign and articulation efforts, embedded Gateways Credentials as stackable components within degree programs. Doing so provides flexible on and off ramps for students to obtain credentials for employment, build on these credentials to obtain an associate degree, and transfer for further education at the baccalaureate level.

The faculty voices in the Workforce Development section discuss the complexities their students encounter in navigating systems and acquiring clear information about the educational options that will allow them to reach their career goals. Such complexities and the lack of guidance have been identified as major institutional challenges for students wishing to transfer (Kadlec & Martinez, 2013). Faculty also describe challenges to advising students along a path that has multiple on and off ramps, shadowed by varying state requirements for employment. The innovative practices designed by the faculty in their EPPI grant partnerships address advising issues with a focus on shared professional development for ECE advisors and clearly designed pathways to support students who elect to transfer to a new institution, as well as for students who opt to earn a credential and exit into employment. One of the main foci of the faculty engaged in this work was minimizing credit loss and its correlates, while maximizing opportunities afforded students through the embedding of the Gateways Credentials as stackable components within degree programs. Other essential supportive practices included program-embedded credentialing, tracking students toward completion, and the creation of streamlined program materials supporting student advisement.

The Workforce Development theme also includes innovative approaches to supporting the specific needs of ECE teachers in a particular region.

Faculty describe initiatives to create professional development opportunities for ECE teachers in rural areas of the state where distance, travel issues, and other limited resources represent significant challenges. These EPPI grant partners highlight efforts to develop ECE knowledge and skills in early math learning, and to ensure access to resources and coursework to help ECE teachers obtain ISBE licensure endorsements in priority areas of English Language Learners or Bilingual Education.

Other faculty voices in this section cover a partnership effort to jointly describe and assess knowledge and skills of students in ECE programs at 2- and 4-year institutions. This particular partnership analyzed the benchmarks for each of the Gateways leveled Credentials and translated these into a set of directed competencies. The competencies, as envisioned by the faculty partners, can support course alignment and transfer, shared assessment systems, and larger connections to professional development within the field. As such, the ECE competencies become a shared language supporting workforce development across both higher education and professional development systems.

Conclusion

"Voices from the Field" represents the diversity of the ECE career path and higher education in Illinois. The monograph includes chapters authored by faculty from 2- and 4-year institutions that span all regions of the state, and both public and private sectors. Each chapter begins with a short description of the institutional context of the EPPI grant partners, including details about student demography. As the authors explore the themes of transfer pathways, partner engagement, and workforce development, they provide practical insights as to accomplishing this work in partnership. They also describe the incredibly important inter- and intra-institutional complexities that must be acknowledged and addressed to undertake and sustain a program redesign and student support initiatives necessary to advance the state's ECE workforce. In doing so, the faculty voices also demonstrate their indefatigable commitment to their students, young children, and the larger field of early childhood education.

References

Bernoteit, S. (2014). *Early childhood educator preparation program innovation grant – 2015/ Continued implementation funding for 2014 recipients*. Unpublished memorandum.

Bowen, W. G., Chingos, M. M., & McPherson, M. S. (2009). *Crossing the finish line: Completing college at America's public universities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bredekamp, S., & Goffin, S. G. (2012). Making the case: Why credentialing and certification matter. In R. C. Pianta, W. S. Barnett, L. M. Justice, & S. M. Sheridan (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood* (pp. 584-604). New York: Guilford.

Community College Research Center. (2015). *What we know about transfer*. Retrieved from http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Community-College-FAQs.html

Complete College America. (2014). *Guided pathways to success*. Retrieved from: http://completecollege.org/the-game-changers/

Helm, J. H., & Katz, L. (2009). *Young investigators: The Project Approach in the early years*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Horn, L., & Skomsvold, P. (2011). *Community college student outcomes: 1994–2009*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics.

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2008). *The Illinois public agenda for college and career success*. Retrieved from http://www.ibhe.org/masterPlanning/materials/070109_PublicAgenda.pdf

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2014). *The public agenda: Five years later assessing Illinois' education progress*. Retrieved from http://www.ibhe.org/Board/agendas/2014/April/NCHEMSReport_KeyFindings.pdf

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2016a). *IBHE data points: Illinois higher education is true to its mission*. Retrieved from http://www.ibhe.org/DataPoints/Mission.pdf

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2016b). *IBHE data points: National student clearinghouse snapshot report – Certificate and associate degree pathways*. Retrieved from http://www.ibhe.org/DataPoints/NSCSnapshot2016.pdf

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2016c). *Report of the higher education commission on the future of the workforce*. Retrieved from http://www.ibhe.org/WorkforceCommission/PDF/WCR082016.pdf

Illinois Community College Board. (2016). *Illinois community college board centralized data system*. Retrieved from: http://iccbdbsrv.iccb.org/advocacyday/files/The%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf

Illinois Network of Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies. (2014). *Facts about the early care and education workforce in Illinois*. Bloomington, IL: Gateways to Opportunity Illinois Professional Development System.

Jenkins, D., & Fink, J. (2015). *What we know about transfer*. New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

Kadlec, A., & Martinez, M. (2013). *Putting it all together: Strengthening pathways between comprehensives and community colleges*. Paper prepared for the American Enterprise Institute.

LeMoine. S. (2008). *Workforce designs: A policy blueprint for state early childhood professional development systems*. Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Limardo, C., Sweeney, T., & Taylor, L. (2016). *Early learning career pathways initiative: Credentialing in the early care and education field*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/pathways/elpathways.pdf

Lichtenberger, E. J. Klostermann, B. K., & Duffy, D. Q. (2015). *The early childhood educator preparation grant: Lessons from initial implementation* (IERC 2015-2). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

McQuaid, R. W. (2009). Theory of organisational partnerships – Partnership advantages, disadvantages, and success factors. In S. P. Osborne (Ed.), *The new public governance: Critical perspectives and future directions* (pp. 125-146). London: Routledge.

Minervino, J. (2014). Quality in center-based early learning: High-level findings and trends. In *Lessons from research and the classroom; Implementing high-quality pre-k that makes a difference for young children* (pp. 3-7). Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from: https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/Lessons%20from%20Research%20and%20the%20Classroom_September%202014.pdf#page=5

Monaghan, D. B., & Attewell, P. (2014). The community college route to the bachelor degree. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.3102/0162373714521865

Mullin, C. M. (2012). *Transfer: An indispensable part of the community college mission* (Policy Brief 2012-03PBL). Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2000). From neurons to neighborhoods: The science of early childhood development. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. In J. P. Shonkoff and D. A. Phillips (Eds.), *Board on children, youth, and families, commission on behavioral social sciences and education*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Nelson, C. C., Main, C. M., & Kushto-Hoban, J. (2012). *Breaking it down and building it out: Enhancing collective capacity to improve early childhood teacher preparation in Illinois Executive Summary*. Chicago, IL: UIC College of Education.

Schilder, D. (2016). *Early childhood teacher education policies: Research review and state trends* (Policy Report). New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes. Retrieved from: http://ceelo.org/wpcontent/uploads/2016/04/ceelo_policy_report_ec_teach_education_policies_final_for_web_2016_04.pdf

Smith, M. (2010). *Transfer and articulation policies*. Retrieved from http://homepages.se.edu/gus/

Soliz, A. (2015). *Increasing community college transfer rates*. Brookings. Retrieved from: https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2015/07/16/increasing-community-college-student-transfer-rates/

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2014). *Occupational outlook handbook for 2012-2022*. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/ooh/

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). *Policy statement on early childhood career pathways*. Retrieved from: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/career_pathways_policy_final.pdf

White, B. R., Baron, D. M., Klostermann, B. K., & Duffy, D. Q. (2016). *Innovations for high quality, aligned early childhood educator preparation*. Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council.

Whitebook, M., Austin, L., & Amanta, F. (2015). *Addressing infant toddler teacher compensation*. Early Educator Central, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from: http://cscce.berkeley.edu/addressing-infant-toddler-compensation/

Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). *Worth work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 2 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

Transfer Pathways

Partnership Description

Loyola University Chicago (LUC) and City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) initiated their partnership in 2014, when LUC early childhood faculty were awarded an Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation grant. Support for this partnership continued through 2015, with additional grant funds awarded for implementation. In this partnership, CCC was represented by faculty from Harold Washington College, one of the seven independently accredited institutions of CCC. The partnership work depicted here was focused on the development of a four-year pathway for Associate of Arts students in Child Development to transfer from any City Colleges institution to LUC (a 4-year university) in order to obtain licensure, as well as English as a Second Language and Early Intervention credentials, all within four years.

The BSEd program in Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) at LUC is part of a family of teacher education programs collectively referred to as Teaching, Learning, and Leading with Schools and Communities (TLLSC). The TLLSC ECSE program prepares teacher candidates through a continuum of school and community based learning experiences across the city of Chicago, rather than primarily through on-campus coursework.

Harold Washington College (HWC) is located in the Chicago Loop and serves students from every region of the city. Diverse HWC students in the 2-year Child Development programs include many full-time early childhood professionals and evening students working toward credential attainment.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

City Colleges of Chicago: http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Pages/ Facts-Statistics.aspx

Loyola University Chicago: http://www.luc.edu/about_loyola.shtml

*Teaching, Learning, and Leading with Schools and Communities: http://www.
    luc.edu/education/undergrad/tllsc/*

CHAPTER 2

Beginning with Yes: Reframing the Narrative in Teacher Preparation to Support Community College Transfer Students in Early Childhood Special Education

Jennifer G. Asimow, Adam S. Kennedy, and Anna T. Lees

Key Words: bridge courses, candidate supports, community, credentials, early childhood special education, ESL/bilingual endorsement, field experience, partnerships, professional learning community, special education, teacher licensure, transfer

Overview of Partnership to Support Licensure Attainment in Early Childhood Special Education

This chapter focuses on a partnership between Harold Washington College, one of the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC), and Loyola University Chicago (LUC), a private, Jesuit university, both located in the city of Chicago. The overall purpose of this partnership was to explore the possibility of students from Harold Washington's Child Development program to matriculate into Loyola's undergraduate program in early childhood special education (ECSE) with a goal of graduation within four years. (Please note: the partnership discussed here was between Harold Washington College and LUC; thus whenever CCC is used, it equates to Harold Washington College, unless otherwise identified.) No such partnership had ever been attempted at our institutions, which are vastly different in program structure, philosophy, and student demographics/backgrounds. The early stages of this partnership focused on exploring the opportunities for partnering

to prepare early childhood candidates, with licensure through the Illinois State Board of Education (from this point forward referred to as *educator* or ISBE licensure) as a shared and non-negotiable priority.

From the start, the partnership between Loyola University Chicago and Harold Washington College was distinctly different from anything else attempted at our respective institutions, as we came to the table with a shared vision of possibility and hope for collaboration. Both partners entered this project with a degree of concern about whether it could work; however, in an effort to keep our collaboration purposeful and productive, we committed ourselves to learning about each other's institutions and students, sharing our programs, and building upon our experiences with articulation rather than operating from a standpoint of "No—that is not possible." By intentionally shifting to a positive attitude of "Yes—let's figure out a way to make it happen," we paved a path for meaningful discussions and negotiations about possibilities for our future shared students.

We determined that a sequence of eight semesters leading to graduation within four years was possible and established a set of objectives for our partnership. We shifted our focus to the development of a 4-year pathway with continuity of supports specifically designed to enable transfer students to succeed during and beyond their transition to LUC. This emphasis follows a 2+2 articulation model. The requirements for the Associate of Arts (AA) in Child Development (including infant-toddler coursework) takes place at Harold Washington College and the remainder of Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) preparation requirements and student teaching occur at Loyola.

The continuity of candidate supports in our pathway was designed to address anticipated challenges for transfer students, including entering Loyola's undergraduate program at a midway point in the continuum, engaging in a new campus climate and community, and holding an increased credit load with stringent academic expectations particularly around writing competencies. The sections to follow describe the processes, challenges, and innovations/outcomes associated with this cross-institutional collaboration, with a particular focus on the supports developed for

transfer students across the resulting 4-year continuum, enabling them to obtain key state-recognized credentials. We next discuss the implications of this work for early childhood teacher education programs, as well as for our understanding of the complex maze of pathways to degrees and ISBE licensure (including their inherent barriers).

Background and Significance of Topic

Literature and Practical Context for Our Work

The U.S. Department of Labor (2016) has projected rapid growth in national demands for preschool teachers between 2016 and 2024. The Illinois Education Research Council (IERC) has reported (Presley, Klostermann, & White, 2006) that Illinois has the capacity to meet this advance, provided appropriate incentives (such as access to ISBE licensure with tuition support and flexible scheduling/course formats) are put in place to encourage teachers to seek out these positions, and assuming that Illinois institutions produce state licensed teachers at a corresponding rate. The continued demand for licensed early childhood teachers sets the tone for articulation and innovative partnerships as a priority throughout Illinois, dovetailing with other national and state policies emphasizing the need for well-prepared educators to work with increasingly diverse children and families (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2010; Heineke, Kennedy, & Lees, 2013; McDonald et al., 2011; Presley et al., 2006).

Streamlining pathways to degree completion addresses needs within this teacher education landscape. Traditionally however, articulation between 2- and 4-year institutions in early childhood teacher preparation in and around Chicago was fraught with challenges. Our initial collaborative discussions highlighted the range of factors (detailed in the following sections) we would need to take into consideration before developing concrete plans.

Demographics

First, our respective institutions serve notably different populations of students. Differences in demographics are one example; according to City Colleges of Chicago (2014), enrolled students are 7% Asian, 36% Black, 38% Hispanic, and 16% White, while LUC's student body is approximately 60% White, 13% Hispanic, 10% Asian, 6% Multiracial, and 3% Black (Loyola University Chicago, 2015). Although some students in the Child Development program at CCC attend classes full-time during the day, a much larger proportion may work full-time and/or take their coursework in the evenings, on Saturdays and online. In addition, many may balance families and other adult responsibilities while working and attending school. Such students can also often bring, to their coursework, a significant degree of direct classroom experience. Alternately, LUC's teacher candidates are usually full-time students who might begin in an early childhood major at age 19-20; these candidates typically complete their BSEd degree with educator licensure in four years, often working part-time to support themselves. In addition, these candidates often live on or near campus as well as receive financial aid.

Institutional Challenges

A variety of institutional practices and factors also stood in the way of efforts to streamline pathways to degree completion. For example, community college faculty typically expect Associate of Arts (AA) students' child development coursework to articulate into the 4-year institution as content courses rather than electives, whereas the LUC policies precluded acceptance of 100 and 200-level child development coursework, except as electives (and even then, only in some instances). Furthermore, students who completed the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree were not necessarily academically prepared to transfer to LUC as juniors. Finding room in students' schedules for extra required general education coursework, as well as the content-specific courses that would prepare transfer students for their junior year, presented a constant challenge. Additionally, as requirements for matriculation into teacher education programs for Illinois state

licensure evolve, there are further complicated attempts at understanding opportunities and barriers.

Program Aims and Structures

Finally, the individual teacher preparation programs at Harold Washington and LUC were developed to serve different aims. For example, the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) offer six nationally recognized Child Development programs throughout Chicago. These programs include courses designed to prepare students or practitioners to work with children, birth to age 8. CCC offers the Child Development Associate (CDA) program (housed at Harold Washington College), a Basic Certificate in Preschool Education, an Advanced Certificate in Preschool Education, and an Associate of Applied Science in Preschool Education. In addition, within the CCC system select campuses offer Infant/Toddler and school-age coursework, certificates and degrees, as well as other courses to further prepare the early childhood workforce (City Colleges of Chicago, 2014). These community colleges focus on workplace preparation in the form of the Associate of Applied Sciences degree in order for students to be well-trained for employment that does not require ISBE licensure, rather than preparing them for transfer to 4-year educator licensure programs.

LUC's teacher education program, Teaching, Learning, and Leading with Schools and Communities (TLLSC; Ryan et al., 2014), was designed around the notion that building intensified, purposeful field-based experience is the most essential strategy for preparing educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to serve diverse children, families, and communities (Kennedy & Heineke, 2014, 2016; Recchia, Beck, Esposito, & Tarrant, 2009; Zeichner, 2010). In TLLSC, faculty members serve as mentors, facilitating candidates' learning experiences in field-based modules that have replaced most traditional courses and clinicals. Fieldwork is continuously supervised and focused on integrated competencies and credentials rather than on isolated topics or methods (Kennedy & Heineke, 2014; Kennedy & Lees, 2014, 2015a). The TLLSC faculty and school/center personnel work together to develop candidates' teaching skills; preparation thus takes place alongside practicing professionals through an apprenticeship-based

model, rather than at the university, with application later through culmi-
nating student teaching experiences. This program was designed to earn
candidates a unique package of credentials, including Illinois teacher licen-
sure for birth-to-8 general or special education settings, English as Second
Language endorsement, early intervention credentialing, and Gateways
Infant Toddler and Preschool Credentials for every graduate.

Developing Unique Outcomes and a Plan

Both partners (CCC/Harold Washington and LUC) recognized the
importance of providing additional supports (i.e., content-specific writing
tutors, bridge programs, and financial aid) for the success of community
college transfer students to succeed in the radically different TLLSC
program at LUC. There are many inherent issues (i.e., alternative learning
format, adjustment to nontraditional scheduling, and increased tuition)
in a BSEd program that is built upon field-based modules (Kruger &
Teaching Australia, 2009) rather than in courses. However, we realized that
a successful partnership could prove unique in the state of Illinois given
our focus on inclusive early childhood special education and, even more
importantly, the potential to support transfer students in obtaining ISBE
licensure. Loyola University Chicago does not offer non-licensure program
options in any area of teacher preparation, so it was agreed early on in
our articulation design that ISBE licensure was critical to this partnership's
potential value to students. Faculty from both CCC and LUC also felt that
our work could hold potential relevance for participating faculty wishing
to ensure the success of underrepresented candidates in their programs.
By bridging two programs with radically different demographics and
designing support structures to ensure a successful transfer experience,
we could demonstrate flexibility and sensitivity in a field-based teacher
education program aiming to diversify the teaching force. A successful
articulation model between CCC and LUC would ultimately (1) prepare
more teachers with cultural and linguistic backgrounds that better reflect
the diversity of children and families throughout the city of Chicago, as
well as (2) provide credentials (including the ESL endorsement) that lead
to increased recognition of/compensation for candidates' professionalism.

Discussions of the above issues unfolded over several months, during which time we involved administration and additional faculty/staff to assist in identifying critical considerations and potential resources. We eventually identified the following unique components of our partnership: a transfer pathway leading to educator licensure, a continuum of support from both institutions over four years, individualized advising, and access to the unique field-based TLLSC curriculum. Each of these components will be presented in detail in the following section.

Design and Implementation of Our Project

Building a Transfer Pathway

First and foremost, we knew that the success of our partnership rested upon our ability to develop a pathway to the LUC BSEd degree for City Colleges' students that, at a minimum, included ISBE licensure with ECSE preparation comparable to that of traditional LUC candidates, the ESL credential, and Illinois Gateways Credentials, all within four years. In order to accomplish this, we worked together over a period of 18 months in collaboration with LUC School of Education administration, transfer office staff, and (perhaps most critically) undergraduate advising in order to identify the exact courses and modules transfer students must take during years one and two. However, this early work rested upon developing a shared language and understanding of our unique programs.

Because TLLSC is a universal and inflexible continuum with only a few opportunities for electives, the biggest initial challenge was to identify lockstep and flexible points on the pathway, given the LUC university calendar, state transfer guidelines, and particularities of the LUC core curriculum. Once the pathway was drafted, we worked another 12 months to develop (in collaboration with both institutions' transfer offices) a pathway document that presented the 4-year continuum in a way that would be comprehensible to students. This pathway was checked and corrected many times through an exhaustive editing and review process involving multiple offices across both campuses.

Design of Field-Based Teacher Education in TLLSC

Our partnership provides access for qualifying City Colleges' students to the unique, field-based TLLSC ECSE program at LUC with intensive preparation in a variety of school and community sites during junior and senior years. This includes field-based learning experiences that span the birth-to-grade 12 continuum, with specialized preparation for these transfer candidates in Pre-K, early elementary, and ECSE programs. During their classroom-based modules at LUC, candidates complete a host of applied assignments (see following sections) under the direct supervision of faculty and classroom teachers. Faculty and classroom teachers encourage and support interaction with young children, as well as the planning and delivery of semi-structured individual and group activities/lessons and units as candidates move through the developmental continuum. Candidates video record regular activities and interactions with children, weekly faculty, and peer progress monitoring using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) (a tool designed to provide specific feedback to teachers using observational data in order to improve teaching and student outcomes) (LaParo, Hamre, & Pianta, 2012). Additionally, candidates receive immediate and consistent feedback from classroom teachers, while faculty provide daily supervision, individualized critiques (during/after classroom visits), and weekly formal narrative and quantitative feedback. Multi-tiered supports (National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2012)—universal, targeted, and intensive—are implemented by faculty and teachers in order to further candidates' skill development (Kennedy & Lees, 2014, 2015b). *Universal supports* (e.g., on-site seminar and classroom-based learning experiences, explicit feedback on activity/lesson plans, peer and instructor feedback on shared videos of teaching, daily verbal feedback on classroom observations, and weekly written progress summaries) promote candidates' learning of adult-child interaction and the facilitation of learning, language, and development. *Targeted supports* are provided to candidates who require additional input to make adequate progress (e.g., additional explicit feedback and individual recommendations, faculty/teacher modeling, targeted viewing of candidates' own and peer videos).

Intensive supports may involve individual improvement plans, conferencing, and more frequent/intensive modeling/support.

Outcomes of several TLLSC implementation studies have shown that candidates enrolled in TLLSC's 4-year continuum develop and sustain evidence-based practices including high-quality adult-child interaction skills, successful instruction and facilitation of development, and thematic unit planning in a variety of grade levels and settings. Research (Kennedy & Heineke, 2016; Kennedy & Lees, 2015a) on candidates has also identified their perceived direct and indirect benefits of peer feedback and the use of video, including increased awareness of individual strengths and needs. As of 2016, the program has yielded two cohorts of graduates who have gone on to work in self-contained special education settings, general education and inclusive settings, and early intervention (Loyola University Chicago, 2015).

Designing Individualized Recruitment and Advising

The LUC and CCC partners developed a recruitment pamphlet with support from a graphic designer in order to inform City College students about the opportunities and requirements of our partnership program. Additionally, a schedule of recruitment meetings was created with the support of the City Colleges. Individualized advising strategies (depicted in following sections) were developed in order to identify and support potential transfer students early in their community college experience, as careful planning would need to occur in order to ensure that they complete all transfer requirements in years one and two. LUC's undergraduate advisor and Associate Dean of Student Services participated in grant meetings in order to discuss and plan these advising activities. In the resulting pathway, LUC faculty serve as the liaison between the School of Education (SOE) undergraduate advisor, and potential transfer students, so that students maintain a relationship with a consistent contact person. Meetings with SOE advising are to be arranged during candidates' first two years. In addition, LUC candidates visit the CCC campuses/courses of child development so that both groups of students, who will later become a single cohort, have opportunities to learn from each other's experiences as early childhood

teacher candidates. In this way, these students may also build relationships prior to when CCC students transfer to Loyola. LUC students may also offer perspectives on TLLSC that faculty and advisors from either institution may not consider. LUC faculty and SOE advisers are to be available to meet with transfer candidates to review their progress and transcripts at any time during their community college experience. This allows for troubleshooting and the efficient identification of supporting resources (i.e., ACT support, writing resources, etc.) whenever appropriate, and it also increases opportunities for communication between LUC and CCC faculty. Upon deciding to articulate to LUC, transfer students may receive individualized, face-to-face advising in the School of Education during and subsequent to their transition. ECSE faculty can facilitate individual conferences with all candidates each semester, and careful coordination and frequent meetings among faculty enable individualized supports to be developed whenever they are needed.

Providing a Continuum of Support

It became abundantly clear in our LUC-CCC grant meetings why so few students successfully transfer to ISBE licensure programs; the wilderness of transfer requirements and university bureaucracy proved endlessly confusing and unpredictable to us. We realized that leaving potential students to face these struggles on their own is a direct deterrent to transfer and, even worse, contrary to our shared social justice missions. We soon shifted our perspective on this process from facilitating the point of transfer to a view of the 4-year experience as a unique continuum of preparation experiences requiring a parallel continuum of supports. A chronological listing of these aids is presented in Table 1.

Advising can serve as one example of support, but a great deal more was needed. A transfer and articulation subcommittee of the Teaching and Learning faculty was formed at LUC; the directive to form this subcommittee was a direct result of our initial reports to faculty regarding the successes and challenges of our project; this provided a critical opportunity to involve faculty from outside of the ECSE program. These faculty members worked to identify supports at LUC within and outside of the School of Education,

Table 1

Transfer Experience - All Four Years with Supports Identified

Home Institution	Year	Supports
Harold Washington College	1	• Recruiting materials and meetings • Establishment of direct relationship with LUC faculty and student mentors • Access to LUC advising • Participation in LUC PLCs
	2	• Recruiting materials and meetings • Continued access to student mentors • Access to LUC advising • ACT online courses and study materials • Participation in LUC PLCs
Loyola University Chicago	Transfer	• Summer bridge program • Face-to-face meeting (panel) with LUC support staff • All TLLSC texts provided
	3	• All TLLSC texts provided • Personal Kindle and iPad for field-based modules and classwork provided free of charge • Kits of classroom and assessment materials provided • Individualized advising • ECSE faculty support for selecting and applying for Y4 one-year internship • Faculty support in identifying areas and methods for licensure examination preparation • Participation in LUC PLCs • Scholarship support (2016-2017 only) to cover majority of LUC tuition
	4	• All TLLSC texts provided • Personal Kindle and iPad for field-based modules and classwork provided free of charge • Complete practice edTPA with faculty support • Participation in LUC PLCs and induction activities • Private job fair • Scholarship support (2017-2018 only) to cover a portion of LUC tuition

as well as generated ideas as to how to build a sense of community and momentum toward degree completion over the 4-year experience. Part of this involves including potential transfer students in professional learning communities (DuFour, 2004; Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, & Thomas, 2006). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) occur at the end of each LUC semester, when all candidates (freshmen through seniors) in the ECSE program meet as a group to share successes and engage in professional development and inquiry. Including City Colleges students in these PLCs, in addition to hosting PLCs on City College campuses, were both proposed within this collaboration.

Summer Bridge Program Development

The transfer and articulation subcommittee, with representation from both Harold Washington and LUC, also developed a summer bridge program to orient candidates to LUC and TLLSC, and to present to the students an array of supports available within the SOE and the larger university. A snapshot of the summer bridge curriculum is presented in Table 2. This intensive program allows ECSE transfer students the opportunity to complete advance preparatory work they would typically accomplish during their first fall semester, lightening their fall load while acclimating to the culture of LUC and the basic features of TLLSC. The Summer Bridge takes place over six consecutive full-day Saturdays in July and August, with on-site child care provided by Loyola ECSE candidates.

Successes of the LUC/CCC (Harold Washington) Partnership

Successes of the LUC/CCC (Harold Washington) partnership, including development of the unique program components described in the previous sections, are presented in Figure 1.

Entering the partnership with a commitment to increasing the numbers of diverse, licensed early childhood teachers, and facing all challenges with a "how can we make this work?" attitude, resulted in deepened collegial relationships between CCC and LUC early childhood faculty. As colleagues, CCC and LUC faculty strengthened our commitment to

Table 2
Summer Bridge Program

Week and Content	Examples of Candidate Experiences
Week 1 – Social Identities » Introductions and orientation to TLLSC » The Power of Stories/Self-documentation » Positionality and epistemology	• Candidates meet faculty and learn about TLLSC phases, sequences, modules, and the PLCs • Social identities exercises; introduction to a self-documentation project candidates complete for the following week
Week 2 – Culturally Responsive Pedagogy » Introduction to culturally responsive pedagogy » Meeting community relations	• Teacher candidates attend a series of panels with various school stakeholders, focused on teaching for social justice and culturally responsive curriculum • Candidates observe and discuss examples of teaching from TLLSC classrooms
Week 3 – Developing Constructive Learning Environments » How teachers facilitate student learning » Characteristics of an effective classroom » Positive Behavioral Interventions/Supports » Tracking and segregation	• Candidates visit partner site classrooms and complete the first of reflective journal entries • Candidates read/discuss/reflect on exposure to social justice, how curriculum is enacted, features of culturally responsive pedagogy that are present, and implications for students
Week 4 – Classroom Management » How teachers facilitate student learning, cont'd » Effective classrooms, cont'd » Theories/Strategies on classroom management and caring communities » Social and emotional learning	• Candidates view videos of effective classroom environments in action • Candidates discuss how student behavior is shaped by environmental factors, as well as the impact of management strategies on student learning • Candidates practice their classroom observation skills for use in subsequent segments
Week 5 – Analyzing Culturally Responsive Classroom Instruction » How teachers facilitate student learning, cont'd » Characteristics of an effective classroom, cont'd » Teaching in culturally diverse settings » Universal Design for Learning	• Candidates complete a lesson analysis, reviewing video with the classroom teacher who taught it during a post-observation conference • Teacher candidates reconvene to debrief experiences and make recommendations for their future work with students
Week 6 – Intelligence » Definitions of intelligence » Language and Identity » Panel discussion with Loyola's community of resources	• Candidates meet representatives from three LUC programs and offices providing supports for transfer students and/or targeted academic and social-emotional support

Benefits

- New cross-institutional relationships and supports, and increased sense of community as Illinois faculty

- Enhanced understanding of the complex landscape of higher education in EC

- Renewed commitment to addressing broader issues facing current and future educators

- Strengthened focus on increasing the numbers and diversity of licensed early childhood educators

Challenges

• Lack of shared vocabulary or understanding of shared priorities
• Lack of awareness of potential institutional challenges
• Timing supports and resources appropriately in an atmosphere of uncertainty
• Lack of institutional supports for specific partnership initiatives
• Building awareness of faculty at Loyola outside of administration
• Low institutional prioritization of early childhood education
• Number and lack of collaboration/ consistent communication systems among essential stakeholders such as college/university administration, transfer office, advising, etc.
• Supports as potential burdens to students
• High cost of tuition and temporary nature of tuition supports, plus uncertainty about state financial aid

Figure 1. Benefits and challenges experienced in the TLLSC/CCC partnership

building relationships and mutual understanding between and within institutions to make articulation possible for transfer students.

Within the successes of this partnership are centered positive developments and opportunities for students. For example, student experiences were at the forefront of each step of the planning process, and in anticipation of their successes and challenges transferring from CCC to LUC, we designed unique student supports (i.e., one-on-one advising and the Bridge Program) to ensure a successful transition and completion of the 4-year degree with educator licensure. Maintaining a clear focus on student needs (e.g., academic supports, test preparation, and adjustment to a 4-year university), also strengthened our focus on increasing the numbers and diversity of licensed early childhood educators. Lastly all of this enhanced our understanding of the complex landscape of higher education in early

childhood. As we engaged in this work with a deepened commitment to collaborate as colleagues across institutions and new understandings of all structures and processes, we formed new cross-institutional relationships and supports, resulting in an increased sense of community as Illinois early childhood faculty. In turn, this work renewed our combined commitment to addressing broader issues facing current and future educators (such as ensuring a culturally diverse workforce and specialized training for teachers working with ability-diverse children), thus focusing this partnership to license more early childhood teachers from diverse backgrounds and communities.

Challenges

Figure 1 also presents some of the many challenges associated with our work. As described in the previous section, these challenges took a variety of forms and emerged at various points throughout the project. Initial challenges included the need to develop a common vocabulary and a framework for collaboration without ever having explored our shared or competing priorities as institutions serving very different populations of students. As a result, it proved difficult for us to predict institutional challenges (i.e., institutional changes affecting the CCC Child Development programs and educating administrators about the specific nature of our work) as we were breaking new ground. The tasks we faced also highlighted the need to build the awareness of teacher education faculty outside of early childhood education in order to involve more stakeholders and address the historically low prioritization of early childhood education at our respective institutions.

The timing of the Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Initiative (EPPI) articulation grant funding and the need for specific resources presented additional challenges; for example, we identified transfer student supports that could not be implemented at Loyola, such as paying for required candidate e-based learning and assessment platform memberships, background checks, etc. Such was the case simply because no mechanisms existed to do so. We used these funds in other ways (such as to purchase ACT study materials and other texts). As the partnership moved forward into its planning and approval stages, it became clear that the lack

of consistent communication and collaboration among the many university stakeholders (i.e., college/university administration, transfer offices, advising, etc.) required the grant partners to engage in exhaustive facilitation of intra-university processes (i.e., advising, registration and credit transfer). This dramatically increased the time needed to finalize our pathway and move through the necessary approval processes toward the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between our institutions.

Conclusions and Recommendations, Including Advice for Practice and Research

First and foremost, we learned from this experience that it is impossible to address the complex issues surrounding teacher education and workforce development without devoting time and a genuine commitment to developing a partnership based upon mutual respect and an increased understanding of each other's programs, students, and needs. While generalization is a desirable outcome, and this work has identified ways to streamline the development of additional pathways between other 2-year institutions and Loyola, it has also identified the barriers that stand in the way of any effort to standardize or generalize programmatic innovation across the complex landscape of early childhood teacher education. Regardless, the importance of relationship building in this process must not be undervalued. Growing to understand, respect, and support one another was an essential step in identifying how our efforts addressed our shared social justice missions; this process cannot be ignored. We also developed an appreciation for the significance of program and SOE-level supports (i.e., undergraduate advising) to keep a consistent sense of momentum going throughout this project; this impetus helped to carry our project through several additional (and traditionally more static) levels of institutional bureaucracy (i.e., working with transfer offices and creating a Memorandum of Understanding).

As early childhood teacher educators continue to address the call for increased numbers of diverse, licensed early childhood teachers through innovative partnerships, a critical need exists for research on the processes, outcomes, and candidate experiences in these models. For these models to

be successful and sustainable, policy makers and higher education administration must recognize the need for increased funding to support the work of faculty committed to inter-institution collaboration. Prioritizing the value of articulation and recognizing the need for increased pathways into teacher education by higher education administration will recognize the efforts of faculty already engaged in this work and increase the awareness on the part of other faculty as involvement in the work expands.

As we consider the students we hope will take advantage of this newly developed opportunity, we must be sensitive to the demanding requirements of our pathway. While we have identified many institutional supports (see Table 1), these take time and effort to seek and act upon. We are concerned that such aids may potentially create additional burdens to students in a challenging, credit hour-intensive program. Finally, the high cost of tuition at LUC and the temporary nature of local tuition supports (within a context of uncertainty about state financial assistance) present ongoing challenges for which solutions must be generated in order for our pathway to be viewed as realistic to students. As we call for faculty time spent sustaining partnerships, and which we wish to be recognized by higher education administration as a portion of our required work load, we also look to tuition support for non-traditional students. These things need to be addressed as LUC works to uphold a mission of social justice and open the field of teaching to students from underrepresented communities.

References

American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. (2010). *The clinical preparation of teachers: A Policy brief*. Retrieved from https://aacte.org/pdf/Government_Relations/Clinical%20Prep%20Paper_03-11-2010.pdf

City Colleges of Chicago. (2014). *About city colleges*. Retrieved from http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Pages/About-City-Colleges.aspx

DuFour, R. (2004). What is a "professional learning community"? *Educational Leadership, 61*(8), 6-11.

Heineke, A., Kennedy, A. S., & Lees, A. (2013). Preparing early childhood professionals for the culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms and communities of Illinois. *Early Childhood Research and Practice, 15*(2), n.p. Retrieved from http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v15n2/heineke.html

Kennedy, A. S., & Heineke, A. J. (2014). Re-envisioning the role of universities in Early childhood teacher preparation: Partnerships for 21st century learning. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 35*, 226-243.

Kennedy, A. S., & Heineke, A. J. (2016). Preparing urban educators to address diversity and equity through field-based teacher education. In T. Petty, A. Good, & M. Putman (Eds.), *Handbook of research on professional development for quality teaching and learning* (pp. 437-461). Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Kennedy, A. S., & Lees, A. T. (2014). Merging professional preparation and development through blended practices and a tiered approach in early Head Start. In K. Pretti-Frontczak, J. Grisham-Brown, & L. Sullivan (Eds.), *Young exceptional children monograph 16 - Blending practices to strengthen quality early learning programs for ALL children*. Los Angeles, CA: Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.

Kennedy, A. S., & Lees, A. T. (2015a). Preparing undergraduate pre-service teachers through direct and video-based performance feedback and tiered supports in Early Head Start. *Early Childhood Education Journal* (June 2015). DOI 10.1007/s10643-015-0725-2

Kennedy, A. S., & Lees, A. (2015b). Outcomes of a community-based birth-to-three preparation sequence for undergraduate early childhood teacher candidates. *American Journal of Educational Research, 2*(6), 770-782.

Kruger, T., & Teaching Australia - Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2009). *Effective and sustainable university-school partnerships: Beyond determined efforts by inspired individuals*. Canberra, AU: Teaching Australia– Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

LaParo, K., Hamre, B., & Pianta, R. (2012). *Classroom assessment scoring system (CLASS) manual, toddler*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Loyola University Chicago. (2015). *Loyola at a glance*. Retrieved from http://www.luc.edu/undergrad/about/colleges-and-universities.html

McDonald, M., Tyson, K., Brayko, K., Bowman, M., Delport, J., & Shimomura, F. (2011). Innovation and impact in teacher education: Community-based organizations as field placements for preservice teachers. *Teachers College Record, 113*(8), 1668-1700.

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (2012). *Response to intervention in early childhood*. Retrieved from http://nectac.org/topics/RTI/RTI.asp

Presley, J. B., Klosterman, B. K., & White, B. R. (2006). *Pipelines and pools: Meeting the demand for early childhood teachers in Illinois* (IERC 2006-3). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council.

Recchia, S. L., Beck, L., Esposito, A., & Tarrant, K. (2009). Diverse field experiences as a catalyst for preparing high quality early childhood teachers. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 30*(2), 105-122.

Ryan, A. M., Ensminger, D., Heineke, A. J., Kennedy, A., Prasse, D., & Smetana, L. (2014). Teaching, learning, and leading with schools and communities: One urban university re-envisions teacher preparation for the next generation. *Issues in Teacher Education, 23*(2), 139-154.

Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Change, 7*(4), 221-258.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2016). *Occupational outlook handbook, 2016-17 edition, preschool teachers*. Retrieved from http://http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/preschool-teachers.htm

Zeichner, K. (2010). Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(1-2), 89-99.

Partnership Description

A partnership between two community colleges and a 4-year university was the result of funding provided by the Race-to-the-Top funds through the Illinois Board of Higher Education's grant opportunity, Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grant. The partnership was formed between Chicago State University (CSU) located in a residential area of Chicago about 12 miles south of downtown; Morton College (MC), a community college in the western suburb of Cicero; and South Suburban College (SSC), a community college located in South Holland, a far southeastern suburb. All three institutions are state-funded and are commuter campuses.

In 2014, CSU, as a 4-year undergraduate and graduate institution, had an enrollment of approximately 5,200 students. Of the entering undergraduate students, 60% were transfer students. In fall of 2014, MC enrolled about 4,700 students, and SSC enrolled about 4,300 students.

As early childhood educators in the three institutions began to collaborate, they discovered their student populations had many similarities which served to enhance the work of the partnership. Each of the institutions served primarily minority populations, with CSU at 84% (11% of the population opted out of responding to the inquiry regarding ethnicity). MC's minority population was 88% while SSC's was 81%. In addition to student populations being largely minority, between 60% and 70% of the populations were female. Average student ages indicate students at the three institutions were non-traditional, with large percentages attending part-time and receiving financial aid. Each institution has mission/vision statements which value partnerships and community engagement in addition to teaching excellence.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

Chicago State University: https://www.csu.edu/IER/documents/ factBook2014-2015.pdf

Illinois Community College Board: http://iccbdbsrv.iccb.org/databook/2014/ section1.cfm

CHAPTER 3

Cross-Institutional Advising and Curriculum Agreements: Supports for Transfer and Degree Completion in Early Childhood Programs

Patricia Steinhaus and Donna Walker

Key Words: academic advising, advisory board, articulation, infant/toddler, teacher licensure, transfer

Overview: The Need for Partnerships Among Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Programs

This chapter provides a description of the partnership work between Chicago State University (CSU), a mid-sized state funded minority-serving university in the City of Chicago; Morton College (MC), a community college, primarily minority-serving institution in the metropolitan area of Chicago; and South Suburban College (SSC), also a minority-serving institution in the metropolitan area of Chicago. Chicago State University is located about midway between Morton College, which is northwest of the university and South Suburban College, which is southeast of the university, approximately 10-15 miles from each. The work of the partnership was funded by Race-to-the-Top monies provided through the Illinois Board of Higher Education's grant opportunity, Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grant. Recently, shrinking dollars in higher education and a greater emphasis on retention and completion rates have resulted in a closer examination of factors which impact retention and increase completion rates within early childhood teacher preparation programs. One promising strategy to address these needs is the development of articulation and

transfer agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions that better define program completion pathways for early childhood professionals.

In 2013, President Obama called on Congress to expand access to high quality preschool for every child in America from birth to age 5. An analysis released by the White House Council of Economic Advisers in 2014 outlined significant economic returns on investments in high quality early childhood education (ECE). The President advanced "a new federal-state partnership to provide all low- and moderate- income 4-year old children with high- quality preschool" (The White House, 2014). An outcome of this early education initiative is a renewed focus on high quality early education, which is consistent with highly regarded research (Early, Maxwell et al., 2007; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015), and has clearly demonstrated that highly qualified teachers and programs dramatically improve short and long term outcomes for children.

As a result of the emphasis on quality early education at the federal level, many states are scrutinizing the training and professional development of teachers and providers in the field of early childhood education. For example, in 2015 the General Assembly in Maryland passed Senate Bill 677 (Maryland S.B. 677, 2015) requiring that institutions offering early childhood education programs develop master plans to address the shortage of qualified teachers and child care providers in the work force. In 2011, Illinois was awarded federal funds through the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.). A portion of the funds was designated to support the development of new teacher preparation programs. It is axiomatic that the goal of high quality early education cannot be reached without the proper preparation of professional teachers. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):

> Teachers who have specific preparation in and ongoing support of professional development and best practice are more likely to have effective, positive interactions with children and their families, offer richer language and other content experiences, use a variety of appropriate curricula and teaching practice (including

play) for individualized and group teaching, and create more high quality learning environments. (NAEYC, n.d.)

NAEYC further asserts that the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act grants (2015) should address the improvement of early childhood teacher preparation programs. According to NAEYC, the alignment of the grants to NAEYC national professional preparation recommendations would foster "greater quality assurance on what teachers know, as well as a greater ability to create articulated 2- and 4-year degree programs" (NAEYC, n.d.).

Establishing Grant Goals

As CSU, MC, and SSC developed the initial grant proposal, the primary goal was identified as tackling the knotty problem of developing transfer/articulation pathways for students. To address this initial goal, the partners worked to identify five to six courses or 16-18 credit hours that could be transferred in a more systematic way between and among the participating institutions, thus increasing the probability of degree completion and reducing students' time, effort, and financial resources needed to do so. The partners found this goal particularly important for two reasons. First, the demographics of early childhood professionals enrolled in higher education in the Chicago area (Klostermann, 2010) tend to present those students with barriers to timely degree completion. For example, Chicago area early childhood students are more likely to have children under the age of 6 living with them (68%), experience work-school conflicts, be enrolled part-time (43%), and face financial challenges which prevent them from registering at all (Klostermann, 2010). Second was the existing lack of systematic transfer agreements (Lichtenberger, Klostermann, & Duffy, 2015).

An additional and unanticipated goal of the three partnering institutions in this study was the emergence of issues around academic advising. This chapter will discuss two factors which impact students' program completion: (1) transferability of academic work across institutions, and

(2) criteria necessary for academic advising and which supports retention and program completion.

Background of the Institutions and Partnership Context

As the teacher educators of the three partnering institutions got to know each other better, it became evident that there were many similarities among the institutions and their student populations. Each institution serves a large proportion of minority students and faces enrollment declines to greater or lesser degrees (Illinois Community College Board, 2016). Other similarities include students who

- are defined as non-traditional (26.7 to 31 years of age),

- enrolled part-time (38% to 69%), and

- receive financial aid (72% to 86%) (Illinois Community College Board, 2016).

In addition, each institution has vision/mission statements which value partnerships and community engagement in addition to teaching excellence (Chicago State University, 2016; Morton College, 2016; South Suburban College, 2016), similarities which served to enhance the collegiality partnership work.

Professional and Policy Context for the Partnership's Work

During the 2013-14 academic years, 46% of students nationwide who completed a degree at a 4-year institution were enrolled at a 2-year institution at some point in the previous 10 years. In 14 states, more than half of 4-year degree recipients were previously enrolled at a 2-year institution (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2016). In fall of 2014, 60% of new students at CSU were transfer students. (Transfer can be defined as student movement within higher education providers and the institutional processes supporting students who may move with credit applicable to a degree or certificate (NACAC, n.d.).) Understanding the

issues around and impact of transfer is critical for postsecondary institutions as they work towards improving progress and success for their students. The student movement data set forth above highlights the significance and need for articulation, transfer agreements, and partnerships between 2- and 4-year institutions.

Articulation of programs in higher education can be a significant issue in early childhood workforce preparation. Early and Winton (2001), state that articulation can be defined as "policies, guidelines, and practices that allow students to transfer credits earned in one university or college to another." In order to meet the need for higher level credentials in the field, students who begin their postsecondary education in community colleges need clear pathways to 4-year degree programs. Articulation can increase the size and diversity of the early childhood workforce by improving educational options for students and positively influencing successful completion of their degrees (Cassidy, Hestenes, Teague, & Springs, 2000). Moreover, "Articulation and transfer agreements facilitate the movement of students between different institutions by establishing guidelines for admission and/or transfer credit and are typically constructed on the basis of courses, academic majors, department curricula or a general education core" (Gutierrez, 2004, p. 119). In Illinois, 2- and 4-year institutions have both begun to recognize their need for each other.

EPPI/Race to the Top

The funds for the EPPI grants, a portion of the State of Illinois' Race to the Top funding (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d), served as a fulcrum in leveraging to action the conversations about collaboration—which had for years had been discussed around conference tables but left at said tables as conferences ended. The EPPI grants provided 2- and 4-year institutions with an officially sanctioned rationale and monetary support for the travel and time needed to move those conversations forward from conference tables into action. Accountability for accomplishing goals that were outlined in grant proposals was also a factor.

Gateways to Opportunity Registry

An additional resource to the described project has been the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity Registry, with which licensed center staff must register and into which completed formal education and professional development is entered for each staff member. Gateways to Opportunity© is a statewide professional development support system" (Gateways to Opportunity, n.d.), which has designed leveled professional credentials that are awarded and recognized by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), Bureau of Child Care and Development. These credentials are required for varying Circles of Quality in ExceleRate Illinois (discussed in following sections), a graduated child care reimbursement system in Illinois based on a program quality framework (ExceleRate, n.d.). The Gateways data base, in addition, provides a view of the landscape of professional preparedness of the child care work force in Illinois with respect to education and credentials. Said data supports both rationale for articulation agreements and information needed for planning and implementation of transfer/articulation agreements. The credentials themselves are a means for professionals to demonstrate higher levels of preparedness.

Illinois Articulation Initiative

Finally, resources from the policy perspective also emerged when the Illinois Articulation Initiative, a system developed in Illinois to facilitate student transfer among institutions of higher education, reconstituted the Early Childhood Panel. The panel is comprised of a group of 2- and 4-year early childhood faculty who agree on courses which might be transferable across institutions, develop a template description and review institutional syllabi for approval. When a course syllabus for an institution is approved, it means that the course taken can be approved at any other institution which also has an approved syllabus for the course, greatly facilitating the transfer of courses and credits for students moving from one institution to another (iTransfer, 2014).

ExceleRate and Gateways Registry

Increasing the level of professional credentials of staff is one element of the ExceleRate's program quality framework. The highest program quality level can be achieved when staff acquire a Level 5 Gateways Credential, equivalent to a bachelor degree. The Gateways Registry data (when accessed in 2014) reported more than 2,000 infant toddler teachers, working in more than 700 licensed centers in the city of Chicago alone, which was significant because infant toddler professionals were identified as a focus of both the EPPI request for proposal and the partnership. In response to ExceleRate, many ECE centers are working to increase their state child care reimbursement rate by upgrading the credentials of teachers. In addition, Obama's 2013 early learning proposal specifies that quality Preschool for All teachers must have a bachelor degree (The White House, 2013). Lastly, the Preschool Development Grant, of which Illinois is a recipient, is targeted to open 2,600 new slots for children possibly requiring up to 130 licensed early childhood teachers (Early Childhood Development, n.d.). Thus, training more ECE teachers in our partnership area is imperative.

Transfer/Articulation Agreements

As stated above, the primary goal of the CSU/MC/SSC partnership was to create clearly structured, more systematic transfer/articulation pathways from 2-year to the 4-year institutions, thus reducing undue loss of credits for students. This goal was a priority for all three members of the partnership and for the larger consortia of institutions, Chicago-area Consortium for Redesigning Early Childhood Education (CACRECE), as well. CSU, MC, and SSC met monthly toward that end. We started by placing our "program plans" side by side and discussing them. Our team compared courses initially to determine which were similar or different and then identified which courses would align and transfer most easily. Initial discussion resulted in the decision to focus first on creating pathways for those students who are interested in pursuing ISBE teacher licensure. That decision determined which programs at the three institutions would be the target of efforts, the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) or Associate of

Arts (AA) programs at Morton and South Suburban and the ISBE teacher licensure option at CSU. The identification of transferable courses included cross referencing our three institutions' selected syllabi, as well as examining objectives, student learning outcomes, texts, and assessments. Initially identified were the child development courses. It was agreed, since CSU required observation hours with its child development course and SSC and Morton's courses did not, that community college students would need to transfer an additional course, which included field hours, along with their child development content course. Ultimately, a crosswalk of courses (see Appendices I-III) was developed resulting in an agreement to transfer 15 professional credit hours for SSC and 18 professional credit hours for MC into the CSU licensure program. The course crosswalk (see Table 1) allows students seeking ISBE Professional Educator License in Illinois with Early Childhood Endorsement to transfer to CSU and complete the program in two years plus a semester of student teaching. As the grant neared its end, however, it became evident that articulating SSC and MC's AAS programs would also provide a great deal of value to and support for another larger population of students—those who are seeking degrees, but not necessarily ISBE teacher licensure.

Table 1
Early Childhood Course Crosswalk for CSU, MC, and SSC

Chicago State University	South Suburban College	Morton College
ECH 4002 The Young Child (Child Development)	CHD 104/105	ECE 100/110
ECH 4170 Nutrition, Health, Safety	CHD 108	ECE 105
ECH 4304 Infant-Toddler Development	CHD 207	ECE 215
ECH 4310 Children's Literature		ECE 120
ED 1520 Intro to Teaching	EDU 110	EDU 100
SED 4301 Characteristics of the Exceptional Child	CHD 203	ECE 125

The Role of Academic Advising

A growing body of literature (Drake, 2011) exists which has identified academic advising as critical to students' retention and the avoidance of unnecessary overlap/repetition of coursework. With shrinking higher education budgets, college administrators have concentrated their resources on those practices which have a high impact, such as academic advising. Light (2001) concludes after ten years of qualitative research involving graduates from 90 institutions of higher education that, "good advising may be the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience" (p. 81). While academic advising encompasses a wide array of functions, in a study which surveyed pre- and post-transfer community college students, Allen, Smith, and Muehleck (2013) found student responses from both groups cited informational functions as a priority in advising; i.e., facts about degree requirements and connections between their degree and a career. Pedescleaux, Baxter, and Sidbury (2008) suggest that "a strong advising program demands more "face time" (p. 26), and that a strong academic advising program communicates to students that the institution has made a commitment to their successful degree completion.

The articulation work of this partnership was paralleled by discussions among our colleagues in the larger metropolitan consortium (CACRECE) of which our partnership was a part. Discussions around advising, its forms, processes, and current functionality emerged from this larger group along with questions such as, "How can we ensure that students are getting the information they need about transferring? How will the outcome of our work be shared with students?" As the grant work continued, consortia members from a number of institutions investigated advising at their schools by asking the question of the advising offices and staff, "If a student came into your office saying that s/he wanted to work with young children, what would happen?" What was discovered was that advising departments/offices were critically uninformed and misinformed about early childhood programs. In some instances, it appeared that advisors did not even know an early childhood degree existed at their institution; in other instances

advisors may have actually encouraged students ***not*** to pursue a degree in Early Childhood.

An outcome of the advising discussions was the realization that an essential component of facilitating transfer was quality advising of students across the 2- and 4-year institutions. The decision was made among the CSU/MC/SSC partners to implement cross advising among their institutions. A model was designed specifically for students who had already decided to seek a baccalaureate degree at CSU. Providing accurate information and "face time" was built into the model (Allen et al., 2013; Pedescleaux et al., 2008).

In planning advising visits, SSC and MC identified the times of the day when courses with the highest enrollment were offered, in order to maximize the number of students who could take advantage of the scheduled advising times. In addition, after the five and six transfer courses had been determined, the SSC and MC partners shared their program frameworks with the CSU advisor. Using the allocated SSC and MC program frameworks and the existing Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) map of general education courses, the CSU Advisor developed transfer program maps specifically for early childhood students attending MC and SSC. The transfer maps outlined and facilitated the advising students received about courses needed for associate degree completion that would also transfer into the CSU licensure program, leading to ISBE Professional Educator License in Illinois with Early Childhood Endorsement. Transfer maps were designed to reduce students' credit loss in the transfer process, thereby also reducing degree completion time.

The early childhood education program advisor from CSU visited SSC and MC twice during the 2014-2015 academic year, in October of the fall semester and April of the spring semester, to maximize student contact and impact. The advisor was given an office and computer access for a five-hour time span each semester at both community colleges. Computer access at SSC and MC provided students with the most accurate information, as their student records and other information critical to successful transfer could be accessed. The opportunity for advising for those interested

in transfer to CSU was advertised to students well in advance of the visits. The transfer program map (see Appendices I–III for examples), developed specifically for each 2-year college, was the tool utilized during each individual advising session. This map allowed students to clearly identify which courses were needed during the first two years and which courses would be accepted in transfer at CSU. Students reported that the process was very helpful towards successfully planning courses to take. They also reported a high degree of confidence in the accuracy of the advising they received, because they had the opportunity to speak directly to someone from CSU and had the program map for reference. This is consistent with research findings of Allen et al. (2013), who state that the functions students value most in advising are (1) accurate information, (2) a connection with the advisor, and (3) evidence concerning how things work at an institution. Additionally, students' opportunities to meet the CSU advisor face-to-face was expected to help SSC and MC students feel more connected to CSU as the receiving institution, providing them with a recognizable face and name.

Other Emerging Priorities and Outcomes

Our three schools identified the following as other emerging priorities and outcomes from the partnership:

1. *Transfer agreements that ensure sustainability even if the players change within the institutions.* Morton College worked to complete an articulation agreement with CSU, which will accept in transfer six MC courses as well as the AAT degree completion. An institutional agreement is in the final stages now with the MC Advising Team. This will formalize the articulation agreement for students completing an AAT degree with a concentration in ECE.

2. *Alignment of course assessments.* CSU/MD/SSC faculty agreed that while alignment of course assessments may not be possible universally, cross-institutional discussion of assessment can only serve to strengthen programs and collaborations. CSU, SSC and MC all use the same assessment platform, LiveText. It is technologically

possible for the three institutions to view and share each other's student assessments.

3. *Alignment of non-licensure degrees.* Over the past few years there has been a massive effort to better define the Early Childhood workforce (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2012, 2015). The Institute of Medicine & National Research Council (IOM/NRC; 2012) reports indicate that only a small percentage (as small as 6%) of the early childhood workforce are employed as licensed teachers in public school settings, suggesting there are many employment opportunities for individuals with a career interest in early childhood, which may not end in early childhood ISBE Professional Educator License in Illinois with Early Childhood Endorsement. Our group determined that these facts should be represented in degree program designs, transfer/articulation agreements, and supported across institutions.

4. *Cross institutional advisory board membership.* CSU and MC partners have "cross populated" the membership of their ECE Advisory Boards. This collaboration has proved to be both informative and valuable with respect to the sharing of program information.

5. *Gateways Credential entitlements.* MC and SSC met with CSU faculty to discuss how CSU had aligned their coursework with the credential framework. The two community colleges then took the framework that CSU had completed and used it as a template to work on the entitlement of early childhood education (ECE) programs at their institutions.

   The partners have also worked on credentialing which will allow students to obtain certificates needed to meet workforce demands, as they work towards attaining their associate degree and Level 4 credential, or bachelor degree and Level 5 Credential.

6. *Increased number of degree options.* As a result of the work enabled by the grant opportunity discussed in this chapter, MC has acquired an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in addition to the

AAT degree. CSU used its grant monies as an opportunity to complete Infant Toddler degree options on the undergraduate and graduate levels, in response to the grant proposal's identification of infant toddler programming as a priority. CSU also implemented a cohort with Gateways/Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) in fall 2015 for professionals employed as or interested in working with infants and toddlers, and who needed or wished to upgrade the level of their Infant Toddler Credentials.

7. *Value of cross institutional partnerships.* As the work of CACRECE and its component triad partnerships began, it became evident that the students at the various institutions are part of a cohort of potential early childhood professionals. As such, they must be supported as they begin meeting demands for increasingly higher education and credentials (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2012). All partnership participants agree that the project provided an incredibly valuable opportunity for support, both financially and administratively. Through the CSU/MC/SSC partnership and CACRECE, we developed relationships that will continue to enhance work in our profession in Illinois for years to come.

Priorities for and Barriers to Moving Forward

Priorities. Our main priority is a comprehensive, systematic funding of the ECE system. While this may seem ambitious, Daniel Burnham (Moore, 1921) states there are "no little plans" if the intent is to incite action.

Workforce barriers. As stated previously, research (Early, Maxwell et al., 2007; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015) on learning and development in early childhood has demonstrated the importance of high quality programs. Such programing is greatly dependent upon skilled teachers. This requires that the credentials of many of

those individuals currently in the profession be upgraded. The challenges of this task are multifaceted. Current demographics of the workforce, including low pay and family responsibilities, can create opposition to students' attempts to obtain the needed credentials, as well as to higher education's efforts to support and provide the needed education.

Institutional barriers. On July 1, 2015, over campus-wide objections, the CSU Academic Affairs Office pulled advisors out of all university departments and placed them in a suite of offices in the campus library. This combined group of advisors was directed to work with all university students in need of advising. This decision is significant because it caused a break in the valuable ECE student-advisor relationships which had developed at CSU, particularly important to nontraditional and transfer students which comprise the largest percentage of the early childhood student population. The decision creates barriers to the cross-advising pilot established for the purpose of easy transfer of academic work across our three institutions; i.e., all advisors will not be familiar with the needs, issues, program nuances and cross-advising requisites of the ECE students coming from the 2-year colleges, and CSU advisors are no longer able to visit face-to-face with students at MC and SSC. Additionally, these changes have compromised the tracking of transfer students at CSU from SSC and MC and resulted in program alignment delays with the AAS degrees at MC and SSC.

Moving forward. There is much to be done before all young children in the U.S. receive quality care and education. The ECE professionals (and would-be professionals) are willing and eager to work towards such aims. The accomplishments of our partnership, described above, are evidence of that.

References

Allen, J., Smith, C., & Muehleck, J. (2013). What kinds of advising are important to community college pre and posttransfer students? *Community College Review, 41*(4), 330-345.

Cassidy, D., Hestenes, L., Teague, P., & Springs, J. (2000). *North Carolina early childhood education articulation manual: The facilitation of the transfer of credit between early childhood education/child development departments in two-and four-year institutions of higher education*. Raleigh, NC: The North Carolina Division of Child Development.

Chicago State University. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.csu.edu/news/missionvisioncorevalues.htm

Drake, J. (2011). The role of academic advising in student retention and persistence. *About Campus,16*(3), 8-12.

Early Childhood Development. (n.d.). *Preschool development grants*. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/early-learning/preschool-development-grants

Early, D. M., Maxwell, K. L., Burchinal, M., Bender, R., Ebanks, D., Henry, G., . . . Zill, N. (2007). Teachers' education, classroom quality, and young children's academic skills: Results from seven studies of preschool programs. *Child Development, 78*(2), 558-580.

Early, D. M., & Winton, P. J. (2001). Preparing the workforce: Early childhood teacher preparation at 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 16*, 300.

ExceleRate. (n.d.). *Preparing children for success*. Retrieved from http://www.excelerateillinois.com/

Gateways to Opportunity. (n.d.) *Illinois professional development system*. Retrieved from http://www.ilgateways.com/

Gutierrez, D. (2004). Articulation agreements that foster a transfer mentality. In B. C. Jacobs (Ed.), *The college transfer student in America: The forgotten student* (pp. 117-129). Washington, DC: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers.

Illinois Community College Board. (2016). *Students*. Retrieved from https://www.iccb.org/students/

Illinois State Board of Education. (n.d.). *What is Race to the Top?* Retrieved from http://www.isbe.state.il.us/racetothetop/default.htm

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2012). *Early childhood care and education workforce: A workshop report*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

iTransfer. (2014). *Illinois articulation initiative* (IAI). Retrieved from http://www.itransfer.org/iai.aspx

Klostermann, B. (2010). *Examining the Chicago early childhood teacher pipeline*. Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council. Retrieved from http://ierc.education

Lichtenberger, E. J., Klostermann, B. K., Duffy, D. Q. (2015). *The early childhood educator preparation innovation grant: Lessons from initial implementation*. Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council.

Light, R. J. (2001). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Maryland S.B. 677. General Assembly Legislative Session. (2015). *Education - Professional development for teachers and providers of early childhood education - Master plan*. Retrieved from http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2015RS/fnotes/bil_0007/sb0677.pdf

Moore, C. M. (1921). *Daniel H. Burnham, architect, planner of cities*. Volume 2, Chapter XXV, "Closing in, 1911-1912," p. 147. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Morton College. (2016). *Mission and philosophy*. Retrieved from http://www.morton.edu/Sites/PTA/Mission-and-Philosophy/

NACAC. (n.d.). *The transfer process defined*. Retrieved from http://www.nacacnet.org/research/transfer/Pages/The-transfer-process-defined.aspx

NAEYC. (n.d.). *NAEYC standards for early childhood professional preparation*. Retrieved from http://www.naeyc.org/ncate/standards

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2016). *Term enrollment estimates*. Retrieved from https://nscresearchcenter.org/currenttermenrollmentestimate-fall2015/

Pedescleaux, D., Baxter, G., Sidbury, C. (2008). Transforming learning: Academic advising at Spelman College. *Peer Review, 10*(1), 24-26.

South Suburban College. (2016). *Mission statement*. Retrieved from http://www.ssc.edu/news-events-information/about-ssc/mission-statement/

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2013). *Fact sheet President Obama's plan for early education for all Americans*. Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/13/fact-sheet-president-obama-s-plan-early-education-all-americans

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2014). *FACT SHEET: Invest in US: The White House summit on early childhood education*. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/10/fact-sheet-invest-us-white-house-summit-early-childhood-education

Appendix I

Chicago State University & Morton Community College

Student's Name: _____   Student ID #: _____

Morton Community College Coursework							
Semester 1				**Semester 2**			
Subject	Course Title	CRD	Grade	Subject	Course Title	CRD	Grade
ENG 101	Composition I	3		ENG 102	Composition II	3	
SPCH 101	Speech Fund	3		MATH 121	Math for Elem Teach II	4	
PSY 101	General Psy	3		BIO 102 w/ LAB	Intro to BIOL	4	
					(recommend for transfer)		
POL 201	American Govt	3		*EDU 100	Intro to American Edu	3	
MATH 120	Math for Elem Teach I	4		*ECE 100	Growth and Dev	3	
HIS 106	Later American HIS 1877	3					
Credits per semester		19		Credits per semester		17	

<div align="center">Take T.A.P, ACT or SAT exam. Submit pass scores to academic advisor</div>

Semester 3				**Semester 4**			
HUM 150	Humanities through Arts	3		MUS 100	Music Appreciation	3	
ART 120	Art Appreciation	3		PHS 103 w/ LAB	Physical Science I	4	
ECE 101	Observaton & Assess	3			(recommend for transfer)		
*ECE 105	Health, Safety, & Nutr	3		**ECE 115	Family, School & Comm	3	
*ECE 110	Intro to ECE	3		**ECE 130	Educational Technology	1	
				**ECE 160	Curriculum Planning	3	

* EDU 100, ECE 100, ECE 110, and ECE 105 must be completed with a grade B or higher in order for it to transfer over to CSU for earned credit for ED 1520, ECH 4002, and ECH 4170.
**ECE 101, 115, 130 & 160 will only transfer over to CSU as an elective towards the nine credits in the Area of Concentration. Courses must be completed with a grade B or higher.

Credits per semester	15	Credits per semester	14
The Illinois License Testing System Test of Academic Proficiency must be completed prior to admission into the College of Education at Chicago State University. It is recommended to complete the test during second semester at Morton Community College.		**Total MC Credits: 65 Minimum for AAT 64**	

Appendix II

Chicago State University & South Suburban College

Student's Name: _____   Student ID #: _____

South Suburban College Coursework							
Semester 1				**Semester 2**			
Subject	**Course Title**	**CRD**	**Grade**	**Subject**	**Course Title**	**CRD**	**Grade**
ENG 101	Composition I	3		ENG 102	Composition II	3	
SPE 108	Speech Fund.	3		ENG 111	Intro to Literature	3	
ART 107	Art Appreciation	3		Humanity/ Fine Art	Elective Group 2	3	
Math 145	Math Concepts I	3		Math 146	Math Concepts II	3	
HIS 204	Later Am. History 1877	3		PSC 101	American Govt	3	
PSY 101	General PSY.	3		BIO 102 w/ lab	Intro Biology	4	
	Credits per semester	18			Credits per semester	19	

Take T.A.P., ACT or SAT exam. Submit pass scores to academic advisor

Semester 3				**Semester 4**			
PHS 101 w/ lab	Physical Science	4		**Area of Con.	Elective III	3	
*CHD 104 & 105	Child Growth Development	6		PSYCH 211	Life Span	3	
*CHD 108	Child Health, Safety, Nut	3		*EDU 110	Found of Educ	3	
**Area of Con.	Elective I	3		***CHD 211	Internship	3	
**Area of Con.	Elective II	3					

* CHD 104, CHD 105, CHD 108, CHD 110 & EDU 110 must be completed with a grade B or higher in order for it to transfer over to CSU for earned credit for ECH 4002 (requires both CHD 104 & 105), 4170 & ED 1520.
** The approved nine credit hours in the <u>one disciple</u> you selected will be transferable to CSU as the area of concentration as long as you receive a grade B or higher in each course.
***CHD 211 will only transfer over to CSU as an elective which does not apply to Student Teacher I or II for completion

| | Credits per semester | 16 | | | Credits per semester | 14 | |

The Illinois License Testing System Test of Academic Proficiency must be completed prior to admission into the College of Education at Chicago State University. It is recommended to complete the test during second semester at South Suburban College	**Total SSC Credits: 62/65 Minimum for AAT**

Appendix III

Chicago State University Coursework

Student's Name: _____ Student ID #: _____

Semester 5				Semester 6			
Subject	Course Title	CRD	Grade	Subject	Course Title	CRD	Grade
PSCY 2040	Psyc Childhd & Adol	3		ECH 4002	• CHD 104 & 105 (SSC) • ECE 100 (MC)	T	
GEOG 1100	Global Diversity	3		ECH 4170	• CHD 108 (SSC) • ECE 105 (MC)	T	
ED 1500	COE Seminar	1		ECH 4000	Found of ECH	3	
ED 1520	EDU 110 (SSC)	T		ECH 4310	Lit for Young Child	3	
READ 3700	Found Rd Instr	3		ECH 4304	Infant Toddler Dev	3	
ECH 4001	History & Phil ECH	3		S ED 4301	Char of Except. Child	3	
ED 4312	Teaching w/ Tech	3		**Apply to the College of Education after first 2 semesters**			
Credits per semester		**16/19**		**Credits per semester**		**12/18**	

Semester 7				Semester 8			
Subject	Course Title	CRD	Grade	Subject	Course Title	CRD	Grade
S ED 4303	Tch Std w/ Sp Nds	2		ECH 4120	Rd/LA Yng Ch	3	
ECH 4008	Creative Exp-Ech	3		ECH 4150	Chld, Fam, Comm	3	
ECH 4009	Sp/Lg Dev-Ech	3		ECH 4319	Inst Meth-Prim	4	
ECH 4850	Scr/EvalYg Chd	3		ECH 4740	Practicum-St Tch I	3	
ECH 4180	Inst Met-Pre Prim	4					
Credits per semester		**15**		**Credits per semester**		**13**	

Semester 9				A total of 124 credits hours must be earned to fulfill CSU/COE graduation requirements. The final 33 hours must be taken at CSU. Grades of C received in professional Education courses will not be transferable to CSU. Candidates are required to maintain an overall GPA of 2.5 and 3.0 in professional education courses.	**Total CSU Credits: 65**
ECH 4750	Student Teaching II	6			
Credits per semester		**6**			

Partnership Description

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) is located in the eastern metropolitan St. Louis area; most SIUE students live and work in the industrial and agricultural counties of the Metro-East. The student population of 14,265 consists of 84% full-time students with over 50% in the 20-24 age range. The student population is mainly comprised of 73% Caucasian, 16% black and 4% Hispanic. Its main feeder community colleges are: Southwest Illinois College, Lewis & Clark Community College, and Kaskaskia College.

Lewis & Clark Community College (LCCC) is located throughout the 220,439-person college district, which reaches into seven counties. The college's enrollment exceeds 11,325 and the student population represents a high percentage of Caucasian students with only 27 % minority subgroups.

Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC) serves people in a 2,100 square mile region that spans eight counties. The college's enrollment for the fall 2014 term was 20,734 students. The student population consists of a high percentage of Caucasian students with 44% represented minority subgroups.

Kaskaskia College (KC) is located sixty miles east of St. Louis, Missouri, and serves all or parts of nine counties. The enrollment for the fall 2014 term was 10,215 students. The student population delineates a high percentage of Caucasian students with only 4% represented minority subgroups.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

Kaskaskia College: (http://www.kaskaskia.edu/AboutKC/Default.aspx.

Lewis and Clark Community College: http://www.lc.edu/uploadedFiles/Pages/
*   About/lcfactsheet.pdf*

Office of Institutional Research and Studies: http://www.siue.edu/inrs/factbook/

Southwestern Illinois College: http://www.swic.edu/accreditation/.

CHAPTER 4

Providing a Pathway to Degree Completion for Child Care Associates in Rural Southern Illinois

Martha Latorre and Melissa Batchelor

Key Words: 2+2 agreement, articulation, Associate in Applied Science, bridge courses, course levels, degree transfer, teacher licensure

The Setting for Our Project

Southern Illinois is mainly rural, populated with small towns and public institutions of higher learning, both 4-year universities and local community colleges. Some of the larger cities in the area are Belleville and East Saint Louis. The early childhood workforce, in this area, centers on state-funded early childhood programs and private care centers. In East Saint Louis, most children are cared for in homes by neighbors or close relations. Education levels of caregivers in the area range from high school to 4-year degrees, with most degrees either Child Care Associate (CDA) or Associate of Applied Science (AAS). For many of these caregivers, the possibility of earning a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree is made impossible due to many barriers (to be covered in following sections) existent within the education system. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the efforts of one university and three community colleges to put an end to these barriers and detail a pathway to successful completion of a 4-year degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE).

The 4-year university in this group, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE), was created over 50 years ago with a mission to provide 4-year degrees to the local population. Many programs, such as the

early childhood education program, were designed for easy access for trans-
fer students, with major classes taken in the last two years of the program.
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville started as a mainly commuter
campus, but has now become a largely residential one. The partnering
community colleges in the grant work were Kaskaskia College, Lewis &
Clark Community College, and Southwestern Illinois College. These were
chosen as they are the leading feeder colleges into SIUE. The populations
within these schools mirror the SIUE population (Kaskaskia College,
n.d.; Lewis and Clark Community College, 2015; Southwestern Illinois
College, 2013).

Partnership School Degrees

Students at the partnership community colleges who are interested in
pursuing a career in early childhood education have a variety of options.
The first two options are the more conventional Associate of Arts (AA),
and Associate of Science (AS), which include a large number of general
education courses, that transfer smoothly to a 4-year degree in early child-
hood at SIUE. A third option, the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) has
become popular, because it encompasses much of the coursework needed
to be a successful care-giver for children, and can be completed in two
years, if taken full time. What is not often included in this last program is a
large number of general education classes that may be required for a 4-year
degree. (Kaskaskia College, 2016; Lewis and Clark Community College,
2016; Southwestern Illinois College, 2016)

A student in the early childhood program at SIUE spends the first two
years of the degree working on general education courses, with degree specif-
ic coursework occurring in the final two years (Southern Illinois University
Edwardsville, 2015). This results in program specific classes being rated as
upper-level or junior-level and senior-level coursework. This is the opposite
of the program for the AAS degree at the local community colleges. When
a community college student with an AAS degree tries to transfer into the
bachelor degree program at SIUE, the student is often faced with having
very few transferable hours. This may spell frustration and anger for the

student trying to complete a bachelor degree. "Start all over again" is what these students hear when they meet with the university advisors.

The outcome of our partnership is to provide a way for students with the AAS at the associated community colleges to be able to transfer into the Bachelor of Science program at SIUE, with a minimum number of community college classes that are nontransferable.

Understanding the Origins of Educational Barriers

Most Americans view a college education as the pathway to the American dream, which leads to wealth and security (Public Agenda, 2000). While this was traditionally seen as completion of a 4-year program at a university or college, students are often beginning their education at community colleges and completing at a 4-year school. So how do students work their way through a 4-year degree program when they begin at the community college level?

To begin to answer this question, it is first necessary to understand the historical background of the educational structure of community colleges. In the United States, university education began as higher education for the elite, the wealthy and powerful of the nation (Witt, Wattenbarger, Gollschecj, & Suppiger, 1994). The development of community colleges (first known as junior colleges), on the other hand, was to fulfill three purposes: first, to offer two years of a university degree that would be transferable; second, to provide opportunities for completing a general education; and third, to create a stand-alone degree for preparation of an occupation that would not be transferable into a university degree. The last, a self-contained terminal degree was to prepare students for semiprofessional occupations such as stockbrokers, florists, teachers and nurses (Koos, 1970). This structure also helped define the academic tracks that students followed, thus keeping less prepared students out of the universities (Witt et al., 1994).

The substance of a terminal degree in early childhood education is usually a 2-year AAS, typically consisting of a limited number of hours in general education (transferable hours of 15 or so) with the majority of the work in the chosen major. Although this distribution of courses greatly aids

an individual's ability to move quickly into the early childhood workforce, it limits the transferability of the 60+ hours comprising the AAS degree (Arney, Hardebeck, Estrada, & Permenter, 2006). While some community college courses appear to be equivalent to university courses by title or course description, the depth of coverage and rigor of assignments within the courses may vary greatly. Such differentiation may prove confusing to an early childhood education (ECE) student who has just completed an associate degree.

While the AA and AS degrees in Early Childhood Education lend themselves more easily to transitioning into a 4-year degree due to the large number of general education classes required, this is often not the case with the AAS degree, which may include few general education classes and often mostly major emphasis classes. As a solution, course articulation would seem to be the easiest to follow, but that would assume that the courses at the 2-year level are equivalent to those offered at the 4-year university. This often is not the case, nor may it be acceptable to the faculty and administration of 4-year universities when Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) licensing requirements are on the line. Most large universities in Illinois (e.g., Illinois State University, University of Illinois, and Southern Illinois University Carbondale), have two options for an early childhood degree: a ISBE licensure track, and a child growth and development track. An AAS degree is more easily articulated into a child development degree, as the additional general education requirements and state standards for ISBE licensure do not have to be met.

Developing a pathway for AAS students to reach the attainment of a 4-year degree with ISBE licensure is extremely important. Increasingly, national focus is being placed on early childhood education with states attempting to expand their service to children, aged 4 and 5 (The White House, 2013). Universities offering early childhood degrees with and without ISBE licensure (such as SIUE), are receiving increasingly more applications for admission but hardly enough to keep up with the predicted growth need for early childhood teachers (Keigher & Cross, 2010). Such facts make it imperative that students, who have completed an AAS degree

and now would like to go on to a 4-year school, have a designated pathway for doing so with the least loss of credits in the transition. Smaller universities offering a single program for these students, such as SIUE, must find a way to approve credit for an increasing number of class hours.

The approach taken, by the partnering schools in this chapter, for this Educator Preparation Program Initiative grant is unusual because it includes a summer "bridge" course that provides students with a way of extending their prior knowledge and challenging their abilities to apply that knowledge in increasingly more complex ways. It can also lead to ISBE licensure or non-ISBE licensure for those with the AAS degree. Our goal was to develop a program articulation showing the connections between the partnering community college programs and SIUE's, using a combination of articulating individual courses through the examination of standards, general education core curriculums, and determining which courses have been accepted as articulated courses throughout the state. The final results of this process would be a 2+2 agreement between SIUE and each individual community college partner, meaning the ECE program could be completed with two years at the community college and two years at SIUE. The importance of the 2+2 was to have an articulation agreement (2+2) that would be clearly stated for the future, for institutional memory of the specific agreement.

Building the Bridge

Once the grant was awarded, three members from SIUE (the Principal Investigator (PI), an ECE faculty member, and the ECE advisor), and a faculty member from each of the community college partners formed the working team. The team began biweekly meetings and was joined by a staff member from Children's Home and Aid who specialized in helping early childhood workers attain additional education. The original idea of the PI was to focus on the evaluation of prior learning experiences (PLE). This could be done through the development of a guided portfolio outlining students' experiences and how such events aligned with program requirements. This sort of evaluation would take into account students' practical

work experiences along with the coursework that had been completed within their community college degree programs. The complexities of developing this portfolio were huge. Prior to the first meeting, the PI investigated existing PLEs to see if anything had already been created that might act as a framework for our work. While many PLEs did exist, none of them were a good fit for early childhood education.

The first meeting discussion began with the portfolio idea. One possibility, suggested as a starting point, was that we might be able to use some of the CDA framework, but that was not something that was at the level of rigor of a university ISBE licensure degree. For prior learning experiences to be presented and evaluated, we began to look at the types of evidence that might be presented and how such evidence would be assigned specific credit to meet state ISBE licensing standards. Participating students would have transcripts from their community college coursework, but what evidence was there from their work experience? The variety of settings for the work experience made is extremely difficult: would working in a home day care for five years be the equivalent of working for those same five years at a nationally accredited center? A simple evaluation from their work supervisors would not suffice to attest to meeting ISBE licensing standards. An observational assessment might be developed, but how does that align with the university requirements for various knowledge and class credits? All of this appeared to be outside the scope of the work that was possible for this grant timeline.

Our next consideration was to look at the actual courses that were required for each AAS program and for the 4-year program. One of the first discussions centered on math issues for the community college students. All four community college faculty members stated that many of the students entering their early childhood programs were not "at college level" for math; therefore, such students must begin with developmental math courses. In some cases, students needed two or more developmental math courses before taking a college level, transferable course. Such additional coursework would mean additional time and effort be expended by these students, if they wished for degree completion and/or transfer to a 4-year

college. To overcome this barrier, it was suggested that all community college students take the Quantitative Reasoning (QR101) course at SIUE or its equivalent at the community colleges. As a freshman-level course, it was thought to be more feasible for the majority of students and it could be substituted for the higher-level classes' prerequisite.

Next, the team turned to looking at the specific coursework that was offered at each partnering institution. SIUE has recently redesigned their ECE program to meet the requirements for ISBE licensure. This new ECE program, to begin in fall 2016, was the basis for comparison with the other partner institutions. Because AAS degrees by definition do not include a large number of general education classes, the group turned their focus on the professional education classes.

Over the next few meetings, the agenda centered on identifying which courses at participating institutions were similar and might work for a simple articulation; i.e., with the community college courses being the equivalent to the university course. Since courses offered at the 100 or 200 level at all institutions could be easily articulated, courses within the 300 to 400 level of the ECE program at SIUE were determined to be the focus of the group for this project.

At each of the next several meetings, a course that was similar for all programs was selected. Prior to the meetings, all participants had shared their syllabi, assignments, and textbook selections with each other via email. During the meeting, each course was discussed, with ideas being shared, and courses evaluated for equivalency. After reviewing all presented materials, four courses that were similar at all participating institutions, according to title and/or catalogue description, were selected as the areas of focus. It was hoped, that with enough similarities among the classes, a one-to-one articulation might be possible.

At this point, the 4-year institution representatives consulted with their provost about the possibility of making such an articulation. At the 2-year community college level, the four courses were at the 100 or 200 level, whereas the 4-year institution's courses were 300 or 400 level; thus a concern over course equivalency arose. The Provost directed the team

members to the 2008 SIUE Curriculum Committee Levels document that detailed critical thinking skills expected at each level of college coursework. Each level (i.e., 100, 200, 300, 400) included the following areas: cognitive domain, student behavioral/affective domain, and assumed/expected preparation. After intensive discussion, a one-to-one course agreement did not seem likely. Table 1 gives a brief example of this levels' sequencing.

While this caused a brief setback, group members from SIUE devised a work-around plan; SIUE would develop a summer course with a module for each of the four agreed upon courses. Within each module, additional content to bridge any gaps between the 100-200 level courses and the 300-400 courses would be addressed. To determine where gaps might exist, a matrix aligning the Illinois Professional Teaching Standards (IPTS) with the four identified courses was developed. At this point, three community colleges worked to determine which of the IPTS were met within each of the four courses at their institutions. The purpose of the matrix was to determine where the 2-year institutions met the same standards as the 4-year university and where the standards were not addressed in these courses/programs. The proposed summer course at SIUE was developed to address the missing areas. Additionally, the group deemed each course module should end with a common assessment. In a collaborative effort, group members worked together to develop common assessments for all modules within the SIUE course. The concluding assessment would be the final exam for the class at SIUE as well as the ending for the last module. This would give tangible proof that by putting the identified community college courses together with a summer bridge module, all students at both levels were achieving equivalent educational outcomes for their approved programs. In this way, students passing the specific module in the bridge course would earn credit for the corresponding course at SIUE. See Appendix A for a brief description and the content for the summer bridge class.

Table 1

Adapted from: A Proposal for the Definition of Course Levels, SIUE

	100 level	200 level	300 level	400 level
Cognitive	Introduction to terms, concepts, ways of thinking	Continued introduction to terms and concepts within the discipline	Integration across multiple topics such that students begin to recognize deeper, predictable patterns within terms, concepts	Development and analysis of the most current terms, concepts, techniques and approaches shaping the discipline
Student Behavioral	Ability to independently focus on and engage with course content	Willingness to begin recognizing and developing an ability to provide responses or create products in response to topics not specifically discussed previously	Willingness to create products with minimum input or direction from the instructor	Willingness to commit time and energy toward solution of problems and/or creation of products with which the instructor may have limited experience
Assumed/ Expected Preparation	Reading comprehension skills sufficient to independently extract and summarize factual and some conceptual knowledge from textbooks	At least some familiarity with some of the basic terms and concepts within the discipline	In-depth familiarity with basic terms, concepts, techniques and approaches of the discipline	Ability to at least propose a problem to be solved or product to be created that is at least somewhat novel to the discipline

Source: Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, n.d.

A last concern centered on community college students' feelings about making the transfer to the 4-year institution. Several of the 2-year partners reported that students felt the campus was too large and overwhelming. They feared that they would get lost or be unable to locate specialized services that were available to them; i.e., there could be much uncertainty during the transition to a larger environment. It was suggested that the summer course (discussed previously) include trips to the SIUE campus as well as provide introductions and tours of important entities (campus buildings, the library, bookstore, offices, student ID card office, etc.) and also include opportunities to connect the community college students with faculty members at SIUE as well as other students who would be starting the program in the upcoming fall cohort.

At SIUE, students have the option of two pathways toward the Bachelor of Science (BS) in Early Childhood Education (Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, 2015). One option is the traditional path, with students taking courses on campus and carrying a 15-18 hour course load per semester. The second option is the Early Childhood On-Site (EChOS) program, which requires students to complete six hours per semester, with all courses offered in the evening and often at an alternate location away from the university. Thus, students may continue to work in an early childhood environment, and might be eligible to apply for an INCCRRA Gateways Scholarship, which could assist with college tuition. The EChOS program has been struggling to stay open for the past two years due to low enrollment. The AAS students entering the BS degree at SIUE would have this additional option, thus helping to revitalize the evening program and offering an option for students to work full time while completing their degree. Through both of these options, students also have the opportunity to obtain ISBE licensure requirements.

While professional education courses were reviewed, the general education requirements for each institution must also be considered for the attainment of a BS degree. Although the community college AAS degrees share some similarities in general education courses across all programs, there are slight differences in the course requirements at each institution.

Through discussions with SIUE's transfer coordinator, 2+2 agreements were outlined for each community college that would allow a student to graduate with both an AAS degree and a Bachelor degree in four years. Thus the partnership articulation agreements cover all general education and ECE coursework necessary for a Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education. (However, due to increased requirements by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), it is possible that a few courses might need to be added before student teaching, in order for a student to qualify for state ISBE licensure.)

Reaching the End and Helping Others to Follow

From the beginning of our work on this grant, all of the group members knew that we were focusing on an issue that had long been a problem for students from community colleges. The question was: how do we transform AAS degree education into something that is equal to higher level university knowledge? What we discovered throughout this process is that it is all about the people that are involved. Everyone came to the table ready to become completely immersed in the project. Our group was an incredible powerhouse of creative thinking, and we all appreciated each other's talents and expertise. Time was spent familiarizing ourselves with each other, each set of students, each program, and each campus. Valuing our partnership colleagues and our work was extremely important. The PI went into the first meeting with the idea of developing a portfolio of artifacts for evidence of prior learning experiences. This idea proved to be too complex for the variety of programs involved; thus the group began to look into similarities within courses; the end result was that changes were made in several of the community college programs in order to better align with the requirements of the 4-year degree granting institution.

The end project resembles road maps, one for each college to follow. Students follow the map of courses to complete the AAS program at their local community college. Then they take the bridge course in the summer, and begin the upper level part of their degree at SIUE the following fall. Without ISBE licensure, students can complete this plan in four years;

with the addition of a small number of additional general education classes, they can complete the requirements for ISBE licensure. In order to meet the needs of all transfer students, SIUE is revitalizing its EChOS program, which is a part-time program, so that a student can take two classes per semester at night and still keep up with the degree plan for completion in five years. This leaves time available for a full time job, raising a family, and/or other responsibilities.

Making this plan work is all about establishing relationships and respecting each other's input. For the future, it is also about maintaining those relationships, valuing each other's work, and finding new ways to help students find the right pathway to complete their education. With the perpetuation of the EChOS program, community college students continue to have the option of working full time as they complete coursework. Barriers have been removed, and students will no longer be told to "start all over again."

References

Arney, J. B., Hardebeck, S., Estrada, J., & Permenter, V. (2006). An innovative baccalaureate degree: Applied versus traditional. *Journal of Hispanic Education, 5*(2), 184-194.

Kaskaskia College. (n.d.). *About Kaskaskia College*. Retrieved from http://www.kaskaskia.edu/AboutKC/Default.aspx

Kaskaskia College. (2016). *Career & technical degrees*. Retrieved from http://www.kaskaskia.edu/Advising/CTDegrees.aspx

Keigher, A., & Cross, F. (2010). *Teacher attrition and mobility-results from the 2008-2009 teacher follow-up study*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2010/2010353.pdf

Koos, L. V. (1970). *The junior college movement*. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press.

Lewis and Clark Community College. (2015). *Lewis and Clark Community College fact sheet*. Retrieved from http://www.lc.edu/uploadedFiles/Pages/About/lcfactsheet.pdf

Lewis and Clark Community College. (2016). *Associate in applied science*. Retrieved from http://catalog.lc.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=7&poid=1145&returnto=282

Office of Institutional Research and Studies. (2016). *Southern Illinois University Edwardsville fact book*. Retrieved from http://www.siue.edu/inrs/factbook/

Public Agenda. (2000). *Americans view higher education as key to American dream* [Press release]. Retrieved from http://www.publicagenda.org/press-releases/index.php?qid=27

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. (n.d.). *A proposal for the definition of course levels*. Retrieved from http://www.siue.edu/ugov/faculty/FinalLevelsDraft.pdf

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. (2015). *Academics & library: Early childhood education (BS)*. Retrieved from https://www.siue.edu/academics/degrees-and-programs/undergraduate/early-childhood-education/

Southwestern Illinois College. (2013). *Southwestern Illinois College AQIP systems portfolio*. Retrieved from http://www.swic.edu/accreditation/

Southwestern Illinois College. (2016). *Academic programs*. Retrieved from http://www.swic.edu/Academics/

The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. (2013). *Fact sheet: President Obama's plan for early education for all Americans*. Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/13/fact-sheet-president-obamas-plan-early-education-all-americans

Witt, A. A., Wattenbarger, J. L., Gollattscheck, J. F., & Suppiger, J. E. (1994). *America's community colleges: The first century*. Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.

Appendix A

Summer Bridge Class	
This class is 5 weeks long. Completion of this course will make it possible for students who have completed an associate degree level of the equivalent courses to receive credit for the course at SIUE. The culmination will be the completion of the four finals that are used for the on-campus classes. Content of the class will be:	
Week 1	• **Orientation** and Introduction to the university. This will include visiting various buildings and essential offices; how the program works; requirements of program, etc.
Week 2	**Infant Toddler Class** • Review of learning from the community college class • Learning components of the final paper • Class work and outside work on the final
Week 3	**Health, Safety, Nutrition, and Physical Activity Class** • Review of learning from the community college class • Learning components of the final paper • Class work and outside work on the final
Week 4	**Collaborative Professional, Family, and Community Relationships** • Review of learning from the community college class • Learning components of the final paper • Class work and outside work on the final
Week 5	**Inquiry, Investigation, and Play in the Early Years** • Review of learning from the community college class • Learning components of the final paper • Class work and outside work on the final

Partnership Description

National Louis University (NLU) and Triton College are partners in creating innovative approaches and pathways that support Early Childhood Education (ECE) candidates to seamlessly transition from the 2- to 4-year college experience to receive a baccalaureate degree with licensure. ECE students at Triton visited NLU's Chicago campus for information and short workshops about transitioning to a licensure program. The grant also provided preparation for taking the ACT plus Writing exam, one of the tests that is used as an entrance requirement to licensure programs in Illinois.

National Louis University, with five Illinois-based campuses and online programs, was founded in 1886 with the radical idea that mothers could become leaders in the education of their children. Elizabeth Harrison, NLU's founder, led a national "kindergarten movement" which worked for recognition of the importance of the early childhood years. Alongside Jane Addams and other social reformers in turn-of-the-century Chicago, she helped create conditions which gave rise to free universal public education. Today NLU educates over 7,500 students yearly, with an undergraduate enrollment just over 2,000. The undergraduate population reflects a non-traditional demographic of working adults with an average age of 34. NLU's student body represents a rich and diverse community of learners; 44% of the student population is African-American, Hispanic, Asian-Pacific Islander and/or Native American.

Triton Community College, located in River Grove, Illinois, offers 100 degree programs and prides itself on strong articulation with area universities to encourage its students to continue for 4-year degrees and beyond. Their unique child development lab school serves as an incubator for prospective teachers of Early Childhood Education. Overall, the college serves the educational needs of a racially and ethnically diverse student body, with more than 12,000 students each semester, which consists of a large population of first generation college students who come from 25 demographically diverse communities in the near western suburbs of Chicago. Triton's postsecondary student population tends be employed, either part- or full-time, while working to advance their educational goals.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

History of National Louis University: http://www.nl.edu/about/history/

National Louis University at a glance: http://www.nl.edu/about/nluataglance/

The Triton difference: http://www.triton.edu/The_Triton_Difference/

Child Development Center Lab School: http://www.triton.edu/childcare/

Chapter 5

Transfer Pathways Beyond Articulation: A Partnership Initiative Between National Louis University and Triton Community College

Sherri Bressman, Ayn Keneman, Kristin Lems, Jason Stegemoller, Mary Ann Olson, and Mary Rinchiuso

Overview

Teachers from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds serve as important role models for the children they teach, not only those who share similar experiences but also those from majority racial backgrounds, as models of competence and respect. Former Education Secretary Riley put it well when he said, "Our teachers should be excellent, and they should look like America" (Riley, 1998, title page). Moreover, teachers who embody diversity and practice culturally-responsive pedagogy can have positive effects on the academic success of their students because they understand what the students are experiencing in their lives (Riley, 1998). A dissimilar workforce at a school makes greater funds of knowledge available to the entire teaching staff, through collegial sharing and daily dialog (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto & Bode, 2008). The kinds of knowledge and insight teachers from varied backgrounds bring to children and their families makes these teachers especially valuable within diverse neighborhoods, such as those served by both National Louis University (NLU)

and Triton Community College. Recognizing the similarities and differences in student populations and embracing a shared passion for teacher preparation, the two schools were eager to work as partners to provide a pathway to Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) licensure for Triton students seeking to become Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers. (Note, all references to licensure refer to ISBE licensure.)

However, in September 2010, the Illinois State Board of Education set a new, higher cutoff score on the teacher entrance exam, the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP; Catalyst Chicago, 2014). As a result of the increase, another barrier to seeking an Illinois Professional Educator License with the early childhood endorsement was created, a change that caused many prospective candidates, especially minorities, to be unable to realize a qualifying score on the TAP. Test result data from the fourth quarter of 2013, for example, showed that only 18% of Blacks and 23% of Latinos passed the math portion of the test, compared to 40% of Whites. Meanwhile, only 26% of Blacks and 34% of Latinos met the reading comprehension requirements, compared to 52% of Whites. Overall, only 18% of Black and Latino test takers passed all four sections of the test, according to state records (Catalyst Chicago, 2014). The low scores are indicative of test unpreparedness and lead to the likelihood that an unknown number of potential ECE candidates never enter baccalaureate programs in education and perhaps never realize their dream of becoming licensed teachers in Illinois.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has waived the TAP requirement (composite score 240) for those candidates with composites scores of 22, and a writing score of 16, on the ACT-plus writing exam, or a composite score of 1110 on the SAT exam (ISBE Educator Licensure, 2016). These two alternatives provide some options for bypassing the TAP, but candidates still may face challenging testing hurdles, and they often do not enter 4-year programs in significant numbers. Anne Hallet, Director of Grow Your Own Teachers, a community-based teacher preparation initiative that seeks to diversify the teacher workforce, points to a number of factors impeding student success, including test anxiety, poor academic

preparation, English as Second Language backgrounds, and struggles with math (Catalyst Chicago, 2014).

In the wake of these trends and with the anticipated growth for early childhood educators projected at 7% between 2014 and 2024 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), it was timely that an Illinois Board of Higher Education Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grant was awarded to National Louis University and Triton Community College. The EPPI grant afforded NLU and Triton a unique opportunity to explore issues surrounding transition to licensure programs in early childhood education and allowed for the examination of access and admission to licensure programs by the partners.

The grant focused on two areas: (1) test preparation and (2) the introduction of potential candidates to a 4-year university environment. The purpose of an introduction was to welcome students to the NLU college campus and expose them to a short sampler of innovative practices in teaching and learning that are part of the Bachelor in Arts in Early Childhood Education (BA ECE) experience. Since passing a high-stakes test of basic skills is a major barrier to program admission for many potential early childhood teachers, the NLU and Triton partners also sought to design supports for candidates that would help them score at the needed level on one of the required exams. An unintended but critical finding that came from this grant was the realization that partnerships and articulation agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions alone are not enough to support aspiring teacher candidates to become licensed early childhood practitioners. The results and conclusions described in this chapter will highlight the lessons learned.

Background and Significance of the Topic

In the winter of 2013, NLU launched a redesign of its BA ECE program leading to the Illinois Professional Educator License. The redesigned program included an endorsement in English as Second Language/Bilingual for all licensure candidates, additional/extended fieldwork in pre-primary and primary age settings, and new coursework in emergent literacy.

Among the many updates to the NLU program was a plan to offer select early childhood classes at Triton College, in order to increase access to advanced professional coursework for those students wanting to complete a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education. In order to qualify for the Triton-based classes, students would have already taken required pre-requisite general education courses as outlined by the standing articulation agreement between the institutions, and would have passed the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP), or an equivalent state-recognized basic skills test.

Unfortunately, none of the prospective BA ECE teacher candidates at Triton achieved the necessary score on the exam. Thus in the fall of 2013, the NLU/Triton partners found there were not enough candidates to hold the ECE licensure coursework on the Triton campus. These disappointing results and the announcement of the EPPI grant revitalized the commitment between NLU and Triton and helped to re-focus plans to support early childhood teacher candidates seeking to obtain a professional educator license in the state of Illinois.

Initiatives

Grant-funded activities were two-fold. One aspect focused on supporting prospective ECE candidates as they worked to pass the basic skills exam. To meet this goal, Triton and NLU faculty decided to provide interested candidates with extracurricular opportunities. Due to the constraint of a single year grant timeframe, it was decided that efforts would focus on preparing candidates to pass just one of the state approved basic skills tests, instead of all three. The ACT-Plus Writing exam was selected, based on the availability of specialized ACT test preparation materials.

The second aspect of the grant, creating a welcoming experience to orient community college students to a 4-year institution, provided Triton candidates with opportunities to become familiar with NLU, to sample some of the university's teaching practices and curriculum, and to interact with professors and support staff through two "ECE Innovation Workshops." These workshops were held on NLU's Chicago campus and were

designed to provide extra motivation for reaching the baccalaureate degree. Results of this program planning, the ACT support sessions, and the "ECE Innovation Workshops" are reported in this chapter.

Literature Review

In response to recent scholarship on the need to improve teacher quality (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003) and the academic preparation of pre-service teachers, Illinois lawmakers passed legislation intended to increase the selectivity of colleges of education. The policy requires colleges of education to assess the academic preparation of applicants, and to admit only those who score highly on tests of academic proficiency (Illinois Administrative Code Title 23, 2014). This policy has been operationalized by requiring applicants to pass the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) exam, or to achieve a score of at least 22 on the ACT-plus Writing test, and has had a significant negative impact on the diversity of candidates who are admitted to teacher preparation programs, especially early childhood education (ECE) programs (Chu, Martinez-Griego, & Cronin, 2010; Perona, LaSota, & Haeffle, 2015). While the state's intent may appear well-intentioned, the exams function as gatekeepers with negative consequential validity (Messick, 1989), especially for the state's linguistically and culturally diverse aspiring teachers (Perona et al., 2015).

However, it is not enough to simply provide preparation courses for increasing students' test taking skills. For example, an issue that comes into play with courses designed to increase access to the university has been referred to as the "Matthew Effect." This term refers to research findings (Stanovich, 1986) that show students requiring the most assistance in developing literacy practices are the least likely to be successful in skill-development courses, while those who require the least assistance are the most likely to be successful. It would appear that in order to increase access to ECE teacher preparation programs, more must be done than offering courses and workshops geared toward improving scores on standardized tests.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) finds that 63% of students at 2-year institutions take one or more remedial courses. This, in turn, slows down the time to graduation and adds to costs, resulting in fewer students graduating from associate degree programs than their 4-year counterparts (2012). In order to make the transition from community college to the university effective for ECE students, researchers demonstrated it is vital to provide support at the very beginning of academic programs (Sakai, Kipnis, Whitebook, and Schaack, 2014). Their research was conducted through interviews with 73 early childhood students pursuing ECE bachelor degrees. Most participants were students of color, and one third also spoke English as a second language. These researchers (Saki et al., 2014) concluded that financial assistance, as well as the scheduling and location of courses, was critically important throughout the program, although interestingly, students' use of tutoring, counseling, and technology support actually declined over time. A major implication of these findings is that it is important to heavily invest in academic supports at the beginning of students' postsecondary experiences, while financial assistance, course scheduling, and location of classes remain critical issues throughout ECE programs (Sakai et al., 2014).

Important components in accessing and succeeding in the transition from 2-year institutions to universities include the information students have about higher education in general, the academic expectations of universities, and the supports available to help students succeed. In a report of student success courses in Florida community colleges, researchers Zeidenberg, Jenkins, and Calcagno (2007) found that in addition to developing academic reading and writing practices, students benefited from explicit instruction on improving good study habits. They also found that students did not access university academic support services, because students were not aware of what was available on campus.

Moreover, addressing academic challenges is not enough, as noted in a research summary from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (Dukakis, Bellm, Seer, & Lee, 2007). This summary delineates obstacles ECE students face and identifies some of the supports universities can

provide to address these obstacles. Dukakis et al. (2007) identified lack of academic preparation as an obstacle but also stressed that it is only one factor. Additional complications may include work and family responsibilities, financial constraints, and the need of English language instruction for multilingual students. In examples of programs which sought to address academic unpreparedness, Dukakis et al. (2007) described five programs that effectively prepared ECE multilingual candidates through English language development courses. They also stressed the importance of providing "access-based" support, which includes offering courses at times that fit the work and life demands of ECE students.

Chu et al. (2010) also explored factors related to graduation of early childhood teaching candidates. These researchers recommended a culturally and linguistically focused approach to assisting ECE candidates toward degrees, based on what they learned from the candidates about their experiences in the program. Additionally, Chu et al. (2010) found that building relationships through collaboration and community had a positive effect on degree completion. Chu et al. (2010) moreover shared the following representative questions from ECE candidates who were asked to reflect on their engagement with academic experiences: "Do I feel comfortable here?" "Will my experience be respected?" as well as the following requests: "Make my courses relevant to my work with children," and "Understand my family and work" (pp. 24-29).

Chu et al. (2010) likewise described one community college's approach to addressing low graduation rates of ECE students. Said college created a team of ECE educators and college faculty to investigate barriers and to brainstorm solutions for candidates seeking an ECE associate degree. Strategies to support ECE candidates included focusing on creating and sustaining community collaborations, addressing barriers to degree attainment, and utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy that included vocabulary instruction and focused test preparation workshops.

Lastly, a central feature of the community college team's strategy was to create a partnership between the community college and a local Head Start facility with the primary emphasis to develop a program that recognized

and valued the languages, cultures, and experiences of the ECE learning community. The community college/Head Start team achieved this in their ECE associate degree program by assigning bilingual faculty to courses and by actively including students' life experiences in the curriculum. The associate degree included a bridge program designed to introduce students to academic reading, writing, and math. New students who scored below the cut point for college level English skills were given the support of a college writing instructor and/or English as a Second Language writing instructor. (Chu et al., 2010).

Project Description

The Pathways to Excellence in Early Childhood Education project (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.) involved a collaborative approach to its design and implementation. National Louis University, the 4-year partner, and Triton Community College, the 2-year partner, joined forces to plan the project, having had a decades-long relationship and a transfer articulation agreement already in place. Two ECE faculty members from Triton and four from NLU, representing the ECE and English as a Second Language/Bilingual (ESL/BIL) programs, made up the grant team. From a common interest in student success, faculty from both institutions formed a natural bond as the project planning got underway.

As part of this planning process, NLU and Triton faculty met two times per month over the year-long grant period to talk about the mutual issues facing early childhood teacher education and to brainstorm new and innovative approaches for bringing future candidates into the field. Immediately recognized was the need to address an obstacle many prospective early childhood candidates faced: passing a basic skills exam, the "admission ticket" into a licensure program and the teaching profession.

Further, the needs of the demographic represented by the ECE candidates was analyzed. It was found that most of the Triton students shared the following characteristics:

- currently working or observing at a Triton day care facility,

- low-income,

- students of color (Black or Hispanic),

- first generation college students,

- caregivers for younger siblings or older adults in the home (some),

- working in a day-care or early childhood setting, possibly as the sole wage earner in their family (some), and

- living with parents or adult caregivers.

In addition, more than 50% of the students spoke a home language other than English (Spanish, for all but one of these students). The partner institutions expressed their appreciation and respect for the challenging roles these students had to play, working, studying, and carrying many responsibilities at home. Therefore, the partners discussed at length how the grant design could be of the most value to these talented and versatile students, given their busy schedules, their limited financial resources, their linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, and their relatively new exposure to the "culture" of college. What was needed was an intervention that would be practical, useful, motivating, and move the students toward success.

Because one aspect of the grant focused on test preparation, the Kaplan Test Preparation company (Kaplan, 2016) was enlisted to help guide project planners toward the goal of supporting candidates with the ACT plus Writing exam. Kaplan was selected because of its reputation for assisting students with test preparation; they were enlisted to work with the candidates in workshop settings at both the Triton and NLU campuses. Knowing the population of candidates and understanding the nature of their busy lives, several workshop schedules were created to accommodate

student's availability and study preferences including two 10-week Saturday sessions, as well as a more intensive three full day schedule. All workshops, including materials such as practice books, were provided free-of-charge to candidates.

During the same time period, a Kaplan consultant instructed NLU and Triton faculty in integrative test support for classroom teaching and stand-alone test preparation sessions. Faculty learned the "tried and tested" strategies and practices that are the foundation of the Kaplan curriculum, among them: full length practice tests with complete answer explanations, stress managements tips, and realistic practice for Math, English, Reading, and Science sections. Tips were given for applying these strategies in NLU and Triton classrooms as well, in order to support test preparation in strategic and meaningful ways.

The second aspect of the grant focused on "innovating" the transition from the 2- to 4-year college environment to mitigate students' fear of the unknown. Recognizing that 2-year candidates rarely left their community college settings, as reported by the Triton partners, "Innovation Workshops" were scheduled in which Triton students were brought by chartered bus to the NLU campus in Chicago, the 4-year institution. These day-long workshops were held in fall 2013 and winter 2014, with 55 participants total in attendance. The idea behind the workshops was to provide a "sneak preview" of university life, answer questions about adjusting to a 4-year college, and modeling sample techniques that are used in early childhood teaching.

To create an air of familiarity, a NLU university tour was conducted which included contact with faculty, advisors and financial aid staff, to guide students and help them see for themselves that it is possible to attain a 4-year college degree. As a highlight of the first visit, a guest speaker, an early childhood graduate who had matriculated at both NLU and Triton College, gave visitors a "pep talk." This talk proved highly motivating as reported on student exit slips, as the speaker herself was proof that attaining a degree and licensure was possible, or "Si se puede!"

To give candidates a taste of the fun and engaging 4-year early childhood curriculum offered at NLU, one workshop session modeled multicultural literature strategies supporting early literacy development. Another session demonstrated activities using multicultural music and movement in the classroom. Using music and movement activities with young children has been shown to increase phonological awareness, a prerequisite of literacy, for young learners (Paquette & Rieg, 2008) and for young English Language Learners in particular (Fisher, 2001). These techniques are part of the NLU signature practices in the BA Early Childhood-ESL/Bilingual dual endorsement program.

Results

The NLU/Triton partners hoped that the ECE candidates would be willing to take advantage of this unique opportunity to learn more about test taking strategies. However, it was never expected that students would display the level of enthusiasm expressed during the two "Innovation Workshops."

Although initially only one workshop was planned, the first was so successful that a decision was made to organize an additional one as part of the grant project. Since NLU's ECE BA program had been recently revised to highlight the importance of early literacy as well as to include an ESL/BIL endorsement, the partners were thrilled to have additional Triton students experience the engaging signature teaching practices taught at NLU.

As part of these workshops, the future ECE candidates learned about two specific teaching strategies: implementing the use of multicultural songs to engage young learners, and a literacy strategy, the Three Tier Method for vocabulary development. The Three Tier Method focuses on the selection of key words for vocabulary instruction, which helps young students better understand content and develop richer vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008). The workshop on using multicultural songs included singing songs and learning related movement activities in both English and Spanish. Candidates had the opportunity to experience these described strategies, first-hand, and learn how to apply them in their own

future classrooms. Exit surveys filled out at the end of each workshop indicated that it was very exciting for the candidates to learn new tactics that they could use in building a repertoire of innovative and engaging teaching practices.

The interaction of candidates with the participating NLU faculty in the fun-filled workshops also demonstrated that faculty in 4-year institutions can be just as welcoming as those in 2-year institutions, a fact borne out in students' exit surveys. This was a critical aspect in helping students overcome any fears in moving beyond the 2-year campus setting and transitioning to a 4-year institution. As a highlight, both the NLU President and Provost conducted interactive read alouds with the students, using the inspirational book, *The Dot*, by Peter Reynolds (2003). When candidates adjourned for the day, their enthusiasm was high and their interest in early childhood licensure was heightened as further evidenced by exit surveys.

Survey Results: Student Voices

At the conclusion of each day-long workshop, exit surveys were distributed to gain an understanding of what the students gained from the sessions and how they would apply what they learned in their future teaching. The exit survey, which was anonymous, was collected as students departed.

Below is a selection of questions and responses to the exit survey:

1. *As a result of today's workshop what new ideas and strategies will you use to support early literacy practices with toddlers and Pre-K students?* (Responses are verbatim.)

   - I think having reading time and words of the week would help them.

   - I will pick out words based on the Tier 3 approach, study them, and figure out concrete and fun ways to teach them to the children.

   - Introduce new words that are mature language with an easy comprehension for children.

- I think learning about the 3 tier words was the most helpful. I will definitely use that in the future as a teacher. (Anonymous, 2015)

2. *As a result of today's workshop what new ideas and strategies will you use to bring multicultural music to toddlers and Pre-K students?*

   - Use different language songs, they are very effective for young children.

   - I think children can learn a lot from music so I think having music time and having sing a longs would be good.

   - Sing a song that is in Spanish and use body extensions to communicate the vocabulary.

   - I knew about Ella Jenkins, I did not know the other presenter. Music is universal, I will make an effort to use all kinds of music this week. (Anonymous, 2015)

Additionally, the grant team purchased five multicultural children's books for each participant as a gift and an incentive to begin building an early childhood library. Early childhood professionals have long recognized the critical importance of language and literacy in preparing children to succeed in school (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2006). Moreover, this research shows that early literacy experiences of children with books are linked with academic achievement, reduced grade retention, higher graduation rates, and enhanced productivity in adult life (2006). The Triton students left the workshops equipped with a mini-library of books and ideas to inspire future age appropriate literacy practices.

Results: ACT Test

Anecdotal data regarding candidates' participation in the Kaplan preparation was collected on the first day of the Kaplan instruction and prior to learners taking the ACT plus Writing exam. Students were asked if they had previously taken the ACT, and if so, to share their score (if available), as well as to ask any other questions regarding test preparation, in general. This data showed that candidates' prior scores on the ACT fell below the

target score of 22. Additionally, several students had not had any experience taking the ACT.

None of the 35 candidates that attended the ACT-plus Writing workshop reached the necessary score of 22 on their ACT tests. However, there was still some cause for optimism. Scores moved in the right direction. Self-reported pre-test scores were between 15 and 18 for those who were retaking the test, whereas scores on the post-training exam ranged from 16-21 (with a perfect score being 36). The writing component was not scored on the pretest; therefore, no comparison of writing scores from pre to post training was available.

Anecdotal data showed candidates expressing test-taking anxiety with comments such as: "I am not a good test taker, I am nervous about taking this test," and, in frustration, "How many times do I have to take this test?"

Many American community college students have not had the needed academic preparation at their secondary schools to enter college programs without further academic support, which only slows down their ability to complete a degree program (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Early academic support, throughout high school and community college, will prepare these learners for success in passing consequential tests of basic skills. With ongoing assistance, students will be ready to enter the university setting with enhanced preparedness and a readiness for the many tests that follow.

It should also be noted that attendance at the Saturday preparation sessions was not perfect, and coaches and faculty reported students' commenting on the stresses of schedules and responsibilities, in addition to having negative feelings about taking high stakes tests. It could be inferred that these factors influenced candidate participation and test outcomes.

Lessons Learned and Modifications

The NLU/Triton grant team learned that adding a test preparation workshop prior to taking the ACT, or a similar test of basic skills, is simply not enough to ensure success on the exam. Regardless of the delivery of

the test preparation, it is recommended that 2-year and 4-year institutions partner earlier to strategize and find ways to support candidates in passing these tests. This may mean that partners begin by mapping the curriculum documented in their articulation agreements and identifying specific classes in which to embed test taking strategies and skill development. If studying and test-taking strategies are practiced across many classes, it is more likely to become "second nature" by the time the high stakes tests must be taken. By spiraling content, acquiring skills, and developing test taking strategies throughout the first two years of coursework, the community colleges and their 4-year partners can work in tandem to break down the barriers to passing high-stakes assessments. In this way, many talented and passionate prospective teacher candidates may have a chance at successfully transitioning to a BA program in education.

Suggestions for planning cross college collaboration might include monthly articulation meetings between community college and university partners to deeply examine curricular outcomes, to analyze the reasons for the grades students receive in classes, and to look at the quality of student work. Further, it is recommended that test taking coaches, or instructors, keep anecdotal notes on individual student performance during test preparation sessions, as these notes could be helpful in individualizing test taking strategies that support student success.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Goldhaber and Walch (2014) report on the trend toward higher standards in teacher education:

> Over the past 20 years, there has been a strong policy push toward getting more academically prepared people into the teacher workforce. No Child Left Behind (NCLB), for instance, emphasized academic competence by requiring that prospective teachers either graduate with a major in the subject they are teaching, have credits equivalent to a major, or pass a qualifying test showing competence in the subject. Newly created alternative pathways to certification have sought to bring more

academically-accomplished individuals into the profession. More recently, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) released new standards for teacher training programs, among them, each cohort of entrants should have: a collective grade-point average (GPA) of 3.0, college admission test scores above the national average by 2017, and standing in the top one-third of students by 2020 (p. 40).

As test scores continue to hold a place of importance in the admission criteria for candidates seeking to enter early childhood licensure programs, support for literacy development must be embedded early in the 2-year community college curriculum in lieu of stand-alone test preparation. First and foremost, literacy support must come in classes where the students are already a strong community of learners. Learning in a familiar, comfortable environment lowers anxiety about taking tests, enabling students to focus on developing necessary literacy content and skills. As reported in the exit slips gathered at the conclusion of the "Innovation Workshops," when students and faculty worked together in a relaxed and stimulating setting, students expressed enthusiasm about continuing on their path toward licensure. The NLU/Triton team believes embedding specific literacy strategies and core skills within coursework will make an impact not only on the cognitive domain of test taking, but in the affective domain as well, with students becoming more confident test takers and better prepared to pass.

Our team also concluded that community colleges and their 4-year partners need to purposefully design 4-year licensure plans with both partners at the table. Putting a sharper lens on the respective programs could help map the road to improved coursework and at the same time, improve the test success of prospective teacher candidates. By working together, institutions can help these "shared" candidates navigate a successful and seamless transition from the 2- to the 4-year experience. Embedding essential content and skill development for test proficiency will support the success of teacher candidates in the first two years as they look toward the high stakes admission requirement. Then, with a successful transition

to the next two years of a licensure program, candidates will be able to focus on advanced content and skill development, including proficiencies in teaching English as a second language and the growth of early literacy.

Early childhood teacher education must be viewed as a four-year program commitment that begins at the community college and ends with the awarding of the baccalaureate degree and teaching license at the 4-year institution. Articulation agreements are only a starting point in the design of 4-year programs that support candidate success. As true partners in teacher preparation, community colleges and 4-year institutions need to roll up their collective sleeves, take a new look at articulation agreements, and identify curricular outcomes and academic supports to be delivered throughout the full four years of coursework. With intentional collaborative planning and innovations in teaching and learning, many college students can be helped to enter the teaching profession as highly qualified and passionate teachers of young children.

References

Anonymous. (2015). *Surveys*. Chicago, IL: National Lewis University.

Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2008). *Creating robust vocabulary*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2015). *Job outlook*. Retrieved from http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and- library/preschool-teachers.htm

Catalyst Chicago. (2014). *To boost teacher diversity, state scraps limits on basic skills test-taking*. Retrieved from http://catalyst-chicago.org/2014/03/boost-teacher-diversity-state-scraps-limits-basic-skills-test-taking/

Chu, M., Martinez-Griego, B., & Cronin, S. (2010). A Head Start/college partnership: Using a culturally and linguistically responsive approach to help working teachers earn degrees. *Young Children, 65*(4), 24-29.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Sykes, G. (2003). Wanted: A national teacher supply policy for education: The right way to meet the "highly qualified teacher" challenge. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11*(33). Retrieved from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v11n33/

Delpit. L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: New Press.

Dukakis, K., Bellm, D., Seer, N., & Lee, Y. (2007). *Chutes or ladders? Creating support services to help early childhood students succeed in higher education*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

Fisher, D. (2001). Early language learning with and without music. *Reading Horizons, 42*(1), 39-49.

Goldhaber, D., & Walch, J. (2014). Gains in teacher quality. *Education Next, 14*(1), 39-45.

Illinois Administrative Code. (2014). *Title 23, Section 25.720 HB 490*. Retrieved from www.isbe.net/rules/archive/pdfs/25ark.pdf

ISBE Educator Licensure. (2016). *Waivers*. Retrieved from http://www.isbe.state.il.us/isbewaivers/default.htm

Kaplan. (2016). *Welcome to Kaplan*. Retrieved from http://kaplan.com/

Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over Cannan. The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Messick, S. (1989). Validity. In R. L. Linn (Ed.), *Educational measurement* (3rd ed., pp. 13-103). New York, NY: American Council on Education.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). *An overview of classes taken and credits earned by beginning postsecondary students.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, U. S. Department of Education.

National Institute for Early Education Research. (2006). *The preschool public policy brief.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.

Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2008). *Affirming diversity. The sociopolitical context of multi-cultural education.* Boston, MA: Pearson.

Paquette, K. R., & Rieg, S. A. (2008). Using music to support the literacy development of young English language learners. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 36*(3), 227-232.

Perona, A., LaSota, R., & Haeffele, L. (2015). *Illinois grow your own teacher education initiatives: 2014 Policy and program recommendations.* Bloomington, IL: Center for the Study of Education Policy, Illinois State University.

Reynolds, P. H. (2003). *The dot.* Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press.

Riley, W. (1998). Our teachers should be excellent, and they should look like America. *Education in Urban Society, 31*(1), 18–29.

Sakai, L., Kipnis, F., Whitebook, M., & Schaack, D. (2014). *Yes they can: Supporting bachelors degree attainment for early childhood practitioners.* Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287400882_Yes_they_can_Supporting_bachelor_degree_attainment_for_early_childhood_practitioners

Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly, 21*, 360-407.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *Pathways and partnerships for child care excellence.* Retrieved from www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/pathways.pdf

Zeidenberg, M., Jenkins, D., & Calcagno, J. C. (2007). *Do student success courses actually help community college students succeed?* Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED499357

Partnership Description

In 2014, Roosevelt University, William Rainey Harper Community College, and Harold Washington College of the City Colleges of Chicago received a grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education to partner on creating innovative approaches to improving the preparation of early childhood professionals. This particular partnership work, based on an innovation grant, focused on creating a seamless pathway for students to transfer from a community college to a 4-year university. The articulation agreement focus was identified through conversations and anecdotal observations regarding difficulties students had repeatedly faced when attempting to transfer from a 2-year to a 4-year program.

Roosevelt University is an independent, non-profit metropolitan university with one campus in downtown Chicago, Illinois, and another in Schaumburg, Illinois. Roosevelt draws students from the Chicago Metropolitan area as well as the surrounding suburbs. William Rainey Harper Community College is located in Palatine, Illinois, which is a northwestern suburb of Chicago with the majority of students coming from within the district and about 10% out of district. Harold Washington College is one of seven independently accredited colleges that comprise the City Colleges of Chicago with campuses located throughout the Chicago Metropolitan area. Harold Washington College is located downtown in the Chicago Loop. Because of its central location, it draws students from every region of the city. Although the three partners are located in different areas, their collective students are similar. For example, most students across the three programs are working full-time and going to school part-time, and all three programs partner with a variety of early childhood settings within the Chicago metropolitan area and surrounding suburbs.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

City Colleges of Chicago: http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Pages/Facts-Statistics.aspx

Harper College Community Report:http://goforward.harpercollege.edu/about/community-report/index.php

Roosevelt University: https://www.roosevelt.edu/About

CHAPTER 6

Building on Trust: How Three Institutions Came Together to Create an Innovative Partnership for Student Transfer

Tara Mathien, Carrie Nepstad, Antonia Potenza, Jin-ah Kim, and Wendy Mertes

Key Words: articulation, Associate in Applied Science, Bachelor of Arts, diversity, Gateways Credentials, holistic transfer, infant/toddler, transfer, workforce development

Overview

In 2014, Roosevelt University, William Rainey Harper Community College, and Harold Washington College of the City Colleges of Chicago received a grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education (2016) to partner on creating innovative approaches to improving the preparation of early childhood professionals. For purposes of this discussion, "our" and "we" will be used to refer to this partnership. Our innovation grant focused on creating a seamless pathway for students to transfer from a community college to a 4-year university. In particular, we were concerned with students in the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree track that may have traditionally not intended on transferring.

Historically, the AAS was not designed as a degree that would transfer toward the bachelor degree (BA); it was considered a terminal degree, preparing the student to join the workforce instead of continuing in higher education (Chase, 2011). However, we found that many AAS students change their minds and decide to transfer once they are near completion of

their AAS degrees. Research indicates that about one third of AAS degree holders express a desire to transfer despite the barriers they face in attempting to apply the coursework from the AAS degree to the BA (Chase, 2011). In our combined experience, it has been a struggle for students to transfer with an AAS since many 4-year institutions restrict the number of credits they will accept from the professional course sequence into the BA major. Students may find themselves retaking courses, spending more money than intended, and losing faith both in the fairness of the higher education system and in their own potential to attain a BA degree. In sum, the focus of our early childhood innovation grant deals with creating a pathway for transferring AAS degree students from 2-year to 4-year colleges.

Context

Although we have focused on creating a seamless pathway from the AAS to the BA degree, the larger context is the development of the workforce in early childhood education. In 2015, Illinois received federal funds to expand its current pre-kindergarten programming to reach an additional 13,760 eligible 4-year-olds by the end of 2018 (Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, 2016). The expanded programming, named "More at Four," will be designed to serve the highest need children and their families by opening new programs in low-income communities and enlarging existing programs. We anticipate that there will be a concomitant need for more qualified, degreed teaching and professional staff to serve this population. Many early childhood professionals have obtained some college coursework, but they have not completed a degree either at the 2- or 4-year level (Whitehead, 2013). The Illinois Gateways to Opportunity (Whitehead, 2013) data reveals that 2,248 individuals indicated they had no degree, but "some college" which ranged from two to 265 credits.

Anecdotally, we have found that a majority of students do not complete a BA degree due to a variety of barriers, including access, affordability, and persistence. Research (Gandara, Alvarado, Driscoll, & Orfield, 2012; Martinez-Wenzl & Marquez, 2012) suggests that issues of access and affordability contribute to successful community college to 4-year

institution transfer. Organizations looking for ways to encourage students to enroll and persist in reaching their goals will benefit from considering the options that are described in this chapter.

Background

The bachelor degree is an important educational goal for students in the United States and for many, it serves as a gateway to the middle class (Boswell, 2004). It is expected that by 2018, nationally, 33% of all jobs will require at least a bachelor degree; only 12% will require an associate degree (Boswell, 2004; Chase, 2011). In Illinois, over half of all new jobs currently require a baccalaureate degree (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2016). The call for enhanced education is increasingly true in the field of early childhood education where current initiatives to expand services to children and to strengthen and improve the quality of early childhood programs require a workforce of qualified, degreed teachers and education personnel (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). Nearly half of all students entering postsecondary education begin at the community college (Boswell, 2004). This is particularly true of early care and education professionals working in preschool settings, the majority of whom attend early childhood classes or pursue an AAS. For many childcare teachers and directors, the AAS is the first step in completing a BA (Huss-Keeler, Peters, & Moss, 2013). Clear pathways between the AAS and the BA are critical for the success of students who first choose the community college route. As Boswell states, "for nearly half of the students who enter higher education today . . . what community colleges offer and how transferable the coursework is to other institutions is of the utmost importance to students, their families, states, and the nation as a whole" (Boswell, 2004, p.3). However, often the connecting pathways between 2-year and 4-year institutions can be overly complex particularly when attempting to transfer from an applied degree program: a situation that Ignash describes as a "tangled knot" (2012, pp. 13-14). This tangled knot is particularly challenging to those who have chosen the early childhood profession, and is made even more complicated by the patchwork nature of a field that

includes different education requirements depending on the workplace and funding streams. For instance, an AAS degree is sufficient to be a teacher in a private childcare setting, but Head Start requires a percentage of their teachers to have a BA for the same position, and a public school pre-kindergarten will expect a BA and ISBE teacher licensure.

Workforce Factors

Early Childhood workforce requirements have been increasing in Illinois since the inception of the Illinois Gateways Credential and ExceleRate Illinois systems (Gateways to Opportunity, n.d.). The Gateways Credentials recognize knowledge, skills and experience for working in a variety of capacities in the early childhood field. The five levels of credentials for teaching infants, toddlers and preschool children are aligned with the amount of education and experience in the field, from a few courses in early childhood through Associate and BA level degrees (Gateways to Opportunity, n.d.). ExceleRate Illinois is an initiative that supports and rates program quality in all licensed early childhood programs in Illinois (ExceleRate Illinois, 2014). ExceleRate awards Circle of Quality designations for rating programs, which are Licensed, Bronze, Silver, and Gold. For the Bronze Circle of Quality, at least 30% of teaching staff in an early childhood program must have completed a Gateways Credential Level 2, which approximately doubles the minimum education requirements for child care workers at the basic licensed level required by the state. A Silver Circle of Quality requires at least 30% of teaching staff in early childhood programs to have completed a Gateways Credential Level 3, which increases the minimum qualifications established by the state even more (ExceleRate Illinois, 2014). Early childhood educators are encouraged to attain higher levels of credentials and education in order to support programs in achieving higher rating levels within the ExceleRate system.

Additionally, current state initiatives to expand early childhood education (ECE) services such as "More at Four" will require a growing workforce of qualified, degreed teachers and education personnel to meet those needs. This agenda will necessitate a workforce of master teachers, curriculum

coordinators, licensed early childhood teachers with credentials in bilingual/ESL education and special education, paraprofessional educators, and other professionals prepared to work with young children and their families (Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, 2016).

Transfer Challenges: The A Word

As a result of increasing rigor and greater opportunities to enter a growing field, many community college students are now considering transferring to 4-year institutions in order to earn BA degrees in addition to the terminal AAS degree. But credit loss and the related timeliness to attaining the BA degree are critical concerns for both the student and the early childhood workforce (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).

As stated above, the AAS degree is a technical degree that historically was not intended to transfer towards a BA, but to lead to employment (Chase, 2011). Despite this classification, many students do transfer, while facing the major barrier of restrictive transfer policies that exclude most of the credits earned in an AAS degree. Transfer policies tend to be generous in accepting liberal arts or general education credits, whereas credits for technical/professional courses are not usually accepted (Chase, 2011). The typical AAS degree is 60-70 credits of coursework, predominantly professional or technical courses rather than general education. Usually less than half of those credits will transfer to a 4-year institution. It is not unusual for an AAS degree student to enter a 4-year institution at the freshman or sophomore level and waste time and money having to retake courses that were part of the AAS program (Boswell, 2004; Chase, 2011).

So what are the challenges to articulation? Boswell (2004) says that 4-year institutions' interpretations of accreditation requirements, especially by program-specific accreditors, can be a disincentive to collaboration with community colleges. These interpretations lend support to turf battles between the 2- and 4-year programs, and may mask institutional enrollment or economic considerations that underlay transfer decisions. There is also a systemic bias in the articulation process that advantages the

4-year institutions who make the decision to accept or reject the credits from community colleges. The report of the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015) indicates that the transfer of credits can be hurt or helped by the structure of the articulation agreements which are mostly controlled by 4-year institutions. This systemic bias results in unequal status between the 2- and 4-year institutions and sometimes a lack of mutual respect and trust.

Diversity Issues

Early childhood education programs are offered in every type of community, serving diverse populations across the United States. The report of the Institute of Medicine and the National Research Council (2015) notes that "for early childhood settings, the challenges are maintaining a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce even with increasing qualification requirements" (p. 381). Certainly the population to be served in early childhood programs is anticipated to become even more diverse in language, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and abilities. For instance, Huss-Keeler et al. (2013) reports that the percentage of Hispanic children in the United States is projected to encompass 27% of the population of all children by 2021.

Chase (2011) cites research indicating that ethnic minority students are more likely than their white peers to enroll in community college and to be enrolled in technical degree programs like the AAS. With large numbers of minority groups in the community college system, the opportunity is presented for 4-year institutions to capture a demographic sorely needed in early childhood education. Teachers who represent the diversity and language of their home communities are necessary to successfully teach the children of these communities; they are able to communicate with the children and parents in a culturally sensitive way (Huss-Keeler et al., 2013).

As 2-year colleges are access points for minority students, and transfer is the primary pathway to earning a baccalaureate degree, the barriers to transfer from the technical/professional programs to BA programs described above not only have negative effects on individual students but

also raise concerns about social equity and limits on economic opportunity for minority students. For the early childhood field, these barriers constrain our ability to provide and maintain an appropriately diverse workforce. In our opinion, creating pathways for minority early childhood students to transfer from 2- to 4-year institutions is essential to meet the needs of a growing field.

Models of Successful Articulation and Transfer

The literature references particular models of articulation shown to have promise in promoting baccalaureate degree completion. One example is the program-to-program articulation model (Lutton, 2013). The focus with this is on aligning student performance and assessments rather than course titles, numbers, hours, and credits. Another model that also has many similarities to our agreement reflects the ideas of the "Tops off" or capstone model (Ignash, 2012). In this type of pathway, a BA or BS degree "tops off" a 2-year occupational/technical degree with additional general education courses, as well as broad-based courses within the field.

The literature also suggests that in order to achieve agreements, institutions must have systems in place for collaboration to develop the pathways and processes that will support successful transfer; otherwise the articulation process remains completely in the purview of the 4-year institution (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). On the other hand, "strengthened collaborations between the two types of institutions is one way to establish educator preparation as a process that includes the community college system" (Coulter & Vandal, 2007). For example, Cook (2008) describes collaboration between faculty members at the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO) and Metropolitan Community College (Metro) in northeast Omaha, Nebraska. The goal of the studied collaboration was to create a seamless transition for students who wanted to become teachers, but started at Metro and transferred to education programs at UNO. Faculty members from both institutions identified courses that would be considered UNO courses but were administered by Metro, and planned the syllabi, assessments, and textbooks together. Metro and UNO

students in the Human Growth and Learning courses also did research and presentations together. The success of the collaboration was attributed, at least in part, to the mutual respect between the faculty at the two institutions, and to an absence of turf defending. Cook (2008) noted that faculty engaged in the collaboration saw themselves as equals who brought different strengths to the project.

Significance of Our Work

There are a number of significant factors associated with this work. First, with a focus on AAS degree completion, we have created a seamless transfer of courses and field experiences that have not historically been accepted at 4-year institutions. Boswell (2004) notes that:

> with nearly half of all students starting their postsecondary careers at a community college, creating seamless pathways that will allow these 2-year college students to easily transition into a 4-year college will be critical if states are to achieve their goals of increased baccalaureate attainment.

We would add that in the context of an increasing demand for qualified, degreed early childhood professionals, ease of transfer and attainment of the BA are critical to meeting workforce goals as well. A second feature is that our programs are made stackable: sharing language, objectives, and goals via the common framework used with the Illinois Gateways credentialing system, and making it possible for students to advance in their professional development through that system. Students traditionally identifying as career students or non-transfer, can now also be recognized as university students, in this case, Roosevelt University students.

This is a new strategy in the sense that most partnerships are between 2- and 4-year institutions that focus on the Associate of Arts or the Associate of Science degrees (Chase, 2011, Ignash 2012). Partnerships have not usually addressed the number of students that attain an AAS degree and then decide to transfer. Our approach taps into a diverse and vast pool of potential students who are not moving to the 4-year level due to a variety

of barriers, including affordability and accessibility, prohibiting them from being successful.

The innovation of this grant's work is that we will transfer the AAS in its entirety to a 4-year early childhood program. The model for transfer is a program-to-program model, focused on student performance in institutions that share the same professional standards, as compared to more traditional course by course equivalencies (Lutton, 2013). In our case, the courses of both the 2-year and 4-year institutions are aligned with the standards of the professional organization, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), as well as the criteria of the Gateways credential system. Finally, the baccalaureate program that was designed by the 4-year institution for the AAS transfer students is a capstone program. In this model, the transferring AAS students take general education coursework and "top off" their professional early childhood courses with a focus on multiculturalism and advocacy (Ignash, 2012).

Description of the Articulation Collaboration and Implementation

The plan to create a seamless pathway, to the BA degree for community college students earning an AAS degree, began as a generic exploration of articulation and transfer from two community college early childhood programs to Roosevelt University's BA in Early Childhood. As partners to Roosevelt, Harold Washington College and William Rainey Harper College were ideal. Both are located minutes away from Roosevelt's campuses in Chicago and Schaumburg, Illinois. In addition, both are the top feeder institutions for transfer students to Roosevelt University.

Developing the Partnership

We started meeting every month, initially taking turns at each other's campuses and then moving to electronic meetings using "Go To Meeting" and "Zoom." Our first meeting was focused on understanding each other's curricula and looking for the commonalities between our programs. We examined curriculum and noted that our programs were very similar in both content and structure, utilizing same state and accredited

organization standards (NAEYC); incorporating courses in core founda-
tions, methods of teaching and field experiences; and culminating in a
practicum where knowledge and skills were applied. Our courses led to the
Gateways Early Childhood Credential, Levels 1-4 at Harold Washington
and Harper, and Level 5 at Roosevelt; these provided further evidence of
alignment. There was a shared philosophy regarding the approach to the
preparation of teachers of young children that underlay the design of our
programs; we wanted our students to become reflective, skilled, early child-
hood classroom teachers. We also reviewed our key assessments, finding
that as we were all NAEYC accredited, many of the assessments were the
same. Finally, we talked about our students. We all served the same student
population: mostly female; diverse in race, ethnicity and age with a range
of academic preparedness; and many already working in the field. As we
continued to meet, we came to know each other personally and profession-
ally and developed a mutual respect for the work done at each institution.
From a 2-year perspective, the process was quite easily navigated. Histori-
cally, many 2-year and 4-year partnerships have not enjoyed trusting and
reciprocal relationships. Universities are hierarchical and 4-year institutions
often dominate the articulation process (Cook, 2008; Institute of Medicine
and National Research Council, 2015). The 2-year faculty partners noted
that in the past they had struggled to establish meetings, secure partici-
pants, and agree on articulation agreements that suited both institutions.
They remarked on 4-year institutions' feelings of distrust or fear of the
programmatic quality or integrity level of the 2-year institutions.

Addressing AAS Transfer

Unlike past experiences between 2- and 4-year institutions in this part-
nership, the establishment of a trusting relationship was acknowledged to
be crucial for success. Once that relationship was established, we became
comfortable enough with each other to speak frankly about the issues early
childhood AAS degree students face when transferring to 4-year college
programs. One issue was that there was no clear pathway to a BA degree or
an Illinois teaching license for those community college students seeking
these results.

It is not uncommon for AAS degree transfers to be restricted in the number of early childhood courses that will actually be accepted as equivalents in the 4-year program, even when the courses cover the same content and use the same texts. Courses not equated to the BA early childhood courses are transferred as electives, but are unusable in meeting general education or major requirements and may be required to be retaken at the 4-year college. The result is that AAS degree transfer students will graduate with more than the 120 credits needed for a BA degree.

A second issue is the level of preparedness of the AAS degree students for passing the state-required basic skills tests to obtain a teaching license, a particular concern for students for whom English is a second language. However, not all AAS transfer students want a teaching license. They may be passionate about their work in pre-kindergarten, Head Start, or child-care settings, or are envisioning a different role for themselves, such as child care center director, or parent coordinator. ISBE licensure may be less important than the BA, even though it is often a requirement for a lead role in the classroom or other settings.

It is at this point where the "aha moment" occurred, the turning point where we began to think holistically about the AAS degree. We wanted to pave the way to the BA degree. Rather than break the AAS down into component courses, evaluating each for its equivalency to a Roosevelt early childhood course, we would transfer the entire AAS degree. Thus, students could transfer as many as 66 credits to Roosevelt and take the remaining 54 credits towards the 120 required for graduation there. At Roosevelt, the students would enroll in mostly general education courses, with some capstone courses taught by early childhood faculty.

The Transfer Pathway

The Beginnings

Our recent experience with a number of transfer students in early childhood as well as in elementary, secondary, and special education, was that they were successful in course work and in their field experiences, but had difficulty passing the battery of assessments required for ISBE licensure. As a result, they either opted or were forced out of teacher preparation programs.

Starting in 2011, Roosevelt developed an Educational Studies major that led to a BA but not ISBE licensure. Originally designed for students interested in education but not in teaching, the program had become a default exit for those students who were unable to pass the ISBE licensure tests. Reconsidered, that program could be a major for those AAS degree students not interested in ISBE licensure: a BA program focused on infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, with an emphasis on multicultural education and child advocacy.

In 2014, the Educational Studies major was redesigned to have an Early Care and Education track, incorporating courses from Roosevelt's early childhood ISBE licensure program that mirrored the AAS degree early childhood courses, thus enabling easy transfer. Six credits of additional early childhood courses were designed to create the emphases on multicultural education and child advocacy. We also wanted program completers to be eligible for the Illinois Gateways Infant Toddler Level 5 credentials and so developed nine credits of courses focused on infants and toddlers, including a practicum experience. The re-conceptualized Educational Studies program was approved by both the College of Education (COE) and the university, and was offered for the first time in fall 2016. This program is shown (see Table 1) with the courses considered AAS transfer and the Roosevelt required courses labeled.

In addition to the courses in the Educational Studies major, the students who transferred from the two participating community colleges to Roosevelt University would complete 22 to 27 credits of general education.

Table 1
Educational Studies/Early Child Care and Development

Core Courses (18 SH)	
EDUC 291/ACP 250	Language and Culture in Education*
EDUC 202	Child Development
EDUC 303	Health for Educators
EDUC 321	Creative Arts in Education
EDUC 385	Technology in Education
SPED 219	Survey of Exceptional Children
Early Child Care and Development concentration (30 SH)	
ECHD 309	Child, Family and Community
ECHD 310	Anti-Bias & Multicultural Curriculum*
ECHD 332	Pre-Primary Science, Math and Social Studies Concepts
ECHD 334	Language Development
ECHD 336	Literacy in Early Childhood Education: Pre-Kindergarten
ECHD 338	Early Childhood Curriculum
ECHD 370	Infant and Toddler Classroom Teaching and Learning*
ECHD 375	Practicum: Infant, Toddler and Preschool*
ECHD 380	Capstone: Issues and Advocacy in Early Childhood*

 *Courses taken by AAS transfer students at Roosevelt University

Those courses included Roosevelt signature courses (LIBS 201, Writing for Social Justice and ACP 250/EDUC 291, Language and Culture in Education) plus courses that met distribution requirements, such as American History, Physical Science, or American Politics, if they were not taken at the community college. General education for the transfer students would be the same as that for ISBE teacher licensure students; we wanted the AAS students to have the option of earning ISBE licensure in a Master's degree or post-baccalaureate program. Finally, the program for the AAS transfer students would also incorporate the courses leading to the Bilingual and English as a Second Language state teaching endorsements. Even though students could not receive the endorsements without a teaching license, we felt the background in teaching children who were English language learners was important for every professional working with young children. An example of an AAS to BA program plan is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Program Plan for AAS in Early Childhood Transfers from Harper College

Course Number	Course Title	Semester Hours
LIBS 201	Writing Social Justice	3
Physical science w/lab:		4
PHSC 103 **OR**	Global Climate Change	
PHSC 108	Big Bang, Black Holes	
Humanities:		
HIST 106 or 107	The US to 1865/Since 1865	
OR Humanities Course		
Social Science:		3-6
POSC 101	American Government	
AFS 211, PSYCH 211 **OR**	Psychological Study of Racism OR	
HIST 111 OR HIST 122 **OR**	The World to 1500, The World Since 1500 OR	
PHIL 219	World Religions	
MATH 105	Foundations of Arithmetic	3
Educational Studies:		
EDUC 291/ACP 250	Language and Culture in Education	3
ECHD 310	Anti-bias and Multicultural Curriculum	3
ECHD 370	Infant and Toddler Classroom: Teaching and Learning	3
ECHD 375	Practicum: Infant, Toddler and Preschool	6
ECHD 380	Capstone: Issues and Advocacy in Early Childhood	3
Bilingual/ESL courses:		
READ 358	Linguistics for ESL Teachers	3
READ 368	Foundations of Bilingual/ESL Education	3
READ 373	Assessment of Bilingual Students	3
READ 374	Methods and Materials for Teaching Bilingual Students	3
READ 375	Methods and Materials for Teaching ESL	3
READ 376	Cross-Cultural Studies for Teaching Limited English Proficient	3
Electives		0-4
Roosevelt Total:		**56**

Implementation

So, the agreement to transfer the entire AAS was made among the three partners. For key people at the 2-year level, including advisors, counselors, and administration, there was nothing short of full support and interest in the project. Everyone came together to offer assistance, provide space for meetings, and more. In order to formalize the articulation agreement, the transfer specialist was included in the discussion. Upon review, it was deemed acceptable and shared with the rest of the college and also placed on iTransfer, the website designed to facilitate transfer among 2- and 4-year colleges in Illinois. However, at the 4-year level, support for the agreement was less clear, particularly outside of the COE. The Dean of the COE had been advised of the partnership discussions since the discussions' start, and was interested in the outcome as well as supportive of the redesigned Educational Studies program. However, other administrative offices at Roosevelt were harder to pin down. Over-arching issues were that the university had concentrated for more than a decade on building a traditional, full-time undergraduate student population, and the work of the admission office had been focused on recruiting high school, not transfer students. There were few staff engaged in creating partnerships with 2-year colleges and even then, the approaches to partnership were still based on a course-by-course articulation. Concerns were raised over the levels and equivalence of the courses, as well as how this approach would affect Roosevelt's accreditation. It was not until there was a change at the highest levels of administration that the AAS transfer was accepted, supported, and promoted—eagerly—by Roosevelt's admissions' staff.

In the end, we partners were able to get the word out to students at Harper and Harold Washington. Information sessions were held at both 2-year school campuses in fall 2015. These sessions were organized by the 2- and 4-year faculty with support from Roosevelt's admissions and financial aid staff but attracted just a few students. In spring, 2016, Roosevelt's admissions office held a meeting of transfer coordinators from community college partners and the AAS transfer was described there. The transfer

coordinators received the AAS transfer with enthusiasm and will be alerting students in the community college early childhood programs.

Successes

From Roosevelt's point of view, there have been three successes: the strong positive relationships developed among the partner schools, the development of the AAS transfer pathway, and the redefinition and enhancement of the Educational Studies program. Only the first was an expected success. The development of the AAS transfer pathway was an outcome of those relationships, built securely on the trust and confidence we had in the quality of our partners' work. The redefinition of the Educational Studies program was the result of the need for a 4-year program that could subsume and build on the AAS.

For William Rainey Harper College and Harold Washington College, the success of this project was the establishment of the agreement between the 2- and 4-year schools to accept an entire AAS degree. We view this as a game changer in higher education. With issues of access and affordability plus declining enrollment and frozen state funding, it is imperative that we re-conceptualize higher education to best serve our students. Inter-institutional collaborations, based on mutual respect and with students' success as the goal, are crucial for changing the way our education system functions. Institutions can find commonality in which to launch collaboration and trust by aligning curriculum and learning objectives to shared professional criteria, such as the Gateways Credentials and NAEYC standards. This type of articulation agreement has the opportunity to become adopted at a state level and would be exponentially rewarding for the students in the system.

Modifications and Suggestions

If we were to repeat this process, we agree that we would start with the common ground that our institutions share. Our partnership began with a detailed analysis of programs of study, syllabi, assignments, and assessments. We quickly realized this was not an effective means to an end. However, as soon as we understood that we were all Gateways-entitled and NAEYC accredited, we found the common ground in which to begin our

grant work. The common framework of Gateways and NAEYC standards enabled us to go beyond questioning if objectives were being met or standards upheld. We had a common language and the conversation moved to the credentials we each offered and with what our students struggled. The trust regarding what each institution was assessing, as well as how it assessed, was established. This was a shining moment where our students became the priority.

Contexts for Success

At its core, this partnership focused on students who had attained an AAS degree and chose to transfer to a 4-year college or university. Therefore, our project is not of interest to institutions that do not offer AAS degrees in early childhood. Additionally, this partnership relied on the entitled status that each institution had established for Gateways ECE Credential Levels 4 and 5. NAEYC accreditation also provided a guarantee that we were working towards the same standards. If interested institutions did not share these same entitlements, they may wish to begin by looking into what commonalities they do share, to begin conversations from that perspective rather than a difference-based outlook.

Recommendations and Conclusions

A major recommendation based on what this partnership project has taught us is that we need to move away from transfer based on a course-by-course analysis. We have found that the basis for the success of this project is the trust we have for one another, generated in part from having met the same criteria necessary to align with Gateways and NAEYC standards. The partnership has created a meaningful pathway for AAS degree students to seamlessly transfer from a 2-year to a 4-year institution that had previously not existed. Prior to our agreement, students identified many issues with transfer related to affordability, accessibility, and persistence. However, with a holistic transfer option, students are now provided the supportive infrastructure to succeed.

Thus, based upon the results of our project, we believe that a seamless pathway can be created for AAS degree holders to progress to a bachelor degree and then to ISBE teacher licensure, without having to replicate the early childhood coursework taken at the 2-year college level. With all of the work that Illinois institutions have invested on Gateways Credential implementation, the framework has already been laid. This is an exciting time in higher education. We must be creative, innovative, and progressive in our thinking toward enrolling students and sustaining engagement to completion. We must work together to ensure the viability of our education system in the future years. There is no reason we cannot make student goals of success and completion a reality in a much more refined, respectful, and seamless way than ever before.

References

Boswell, K. (2004). Bridges or barriers? Public policy and the community college transfer function. *Change, 36*(6), 22-29.

Chase, M. M. (2011). Benchmarking equity in transfer policies for career and technical associate's degrees. *Community College Review, 39*(4), 376-404.

Cook, S. G. (2008). Respect helps connect community college to university. *Women in Higher Education,17*(4), 19..

Coulter, T., & Vandal. B. (2007). *Community colleges and teacher preparation: Roles, issues and opportunities*. Issue paper. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States.

ExceleRate Illinois. (2014). Retrieved from http://www.excelerateillinois.com/

Gandara, P., Alvarado, E., Driscoll, A., & Orfield, G. (2012). *Building pathways to transfer: Community colleges that break the chain of failure for students of color*. Los Angeles, CA: Civil Rights Project/Provecto Derechos Civiles.

Gateways to Opportunity. (n.d.). *Illinois professional development system*. Retrieved from http://www.ilgateways.com/

Huss-Keeler, R., Peters, M., & Moss, J. M. (2013). Motivation for attending higher education from the perspective of early care and education professionals. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 34*(2), 121-139.

Ignash, J. M. (2012). Articulation to and from the applied associate degree: Challenges and opportunities. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 158, 13-24.

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2016). *Commission on the future of the workforce*. Retrieved from http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/

Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development. (2016). *Illinois wins $80 million federal investment in early childhood education*. Retrieved from http://www.illinois.gov/gov/OECD/Pages/default.aspx

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015.) *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Lutton, A. (2013). Supporting successful degree completion by early childhood professionals. *Young Children, 68*(5), 51-53.

Martinez-Wenzl, M., & Marquez, R. (2012). *Unrealized promises: Unequal access, affordability, and excellence at community colleges in Southern California*. Los Angeles, CA. Civil Rights Project / Provecto Derechos Civiles.

Whitehead, J. (2013). *Workforce demographics*. Bloomington, IL: Joint meeting of PDAC and ACCESS.

Partner Engagement

Partnership Description

Bradley University (BU) is a private urban university located in Peoria, Illinois, with 4,500 undergraduate and 900 graduate students. BU's Early Childhood Education (ECE) program had a total of 38 students (37 females, 1 male) in fall 2016. Of these, 88% were white, 6% were Latina, and 6% were Asian. Overall, 20% of ECE students were non-traditional (25 years and older). Most (31 students) were from Illinois, with five from other Midwest states and two from outside the region (C. Slane, personal communication, July 12, 2016).

Located in three areas near Bradley in East Peoria, north Peoria, and Pekin, Illinois, Illinois Central College (ICC) is a public community college with a population of 9,705 (fall 2015) who come from 10 rural and urban counties in central Illinois. This population includes 70% white, 9.8% African American, 4.7% Latino/Latina and 2.1% Asian. The ECE program (fall 2016) has 83 students (one of whom is male), and mirrors the overall demographics of ICC. Approximately 29% are classified as non-traditional, age 25 and older (A. Smyrniotis, personal communication, July 12, 2916).

Early Childhood Education professionals (local educators and agency administrators) in the Peoria area worked in collaboration with BU and ICC ECE faculty to facilitate the goals of the grant.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

*About Illinois Central College: https://icc.edu/about-icc/institutional-research/
    essential-facts/*

Bradley University: About Bradley: http://www.bradley.edu/about/quickfacts

CHAPTER 7

Collaborative Power: An Inter-Institutional Community Partnership

Andrianna Smyrniotis, Patricia Nugent, Hwa Lee, Cecile M. Arquette, Robert Wolffe, Beth Bussan, and Heljä Antola Crowe

Key Words: 2+2 agreement, articulation, collaboration, community, diversity, empowerment, ESL/bilingual endorsement, mathematics, partnerships, special education

Context of Collaborative Power

Overview

Promoting our early childhood profession is of utmost importance to the entire Central Illinois community, as quality early childhood education is a crucial building block for all education. The Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grant acted as a catalyst for work within our midwestern community to promote and encourage articulation of teacher preparation through recruitment and development of a cadre of robust licensed early childhood personnel.

The collaboration in the community of early childhood educators was a key piece on which to build the goals of this grant. Other factors that supported the grant were the historically strong ties between Bradley University (BU) and Illinois Central College (ICC). However, the smooth transition between ICC's 2-year to BU's 4-year early childhood programs was an area of interest for both partnership institutions. The grant enabled the creation of the Early Childhood Educators of Central Illinois (ECECI) as a vehicle and a collaborative space for articulation that included community

development between and among the early childhood programs in our community while maintaining our focus on responding to the needs of families with young children. The purpose of our grant work centered on the whole child and family.

Focusing on professional development of high quality teachers, BU teacher candidates are eligible for Illinois State Professional Teacher licensure with endorsements in Early Childhood (ECE), English as a Second Language (ESL), as well as an approval for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), birth-2nd grade. In addition to these endorsements, Bradley is committed to preparing teachers with strong mathematics backgrounds. These three foci we call pillars; English Language Learners (ELLs), mathematics, and early childhood special education (ECSE) are in response to national trends, research, and emphasis on the whole child.

In our work, we endeavored to bridge the pillars to coursework at ICC by embedding collaborative course material and events in order to scaffold the ICC experience to the BU teacher education culture. Our work was accomplished by articulation agreements, which contribute to the seamless transition between ICC and BU's programs, thereby affording candidates support through opportunities in a logical progression toward their professional careers. In addition, the grant work incorporated the pre-existing cultures of both institutions. *Figure 1* is a visual representation of the framework of the grant, as well as the importance of communities of practice in both institutions and within the grant. The communities of practice highlight the relationships that arose as the work progressed (such as the levels of deep support and involvement demonstrated by agency stakeholders including SAL Child Care Connections, United Way, and Bright Futures).
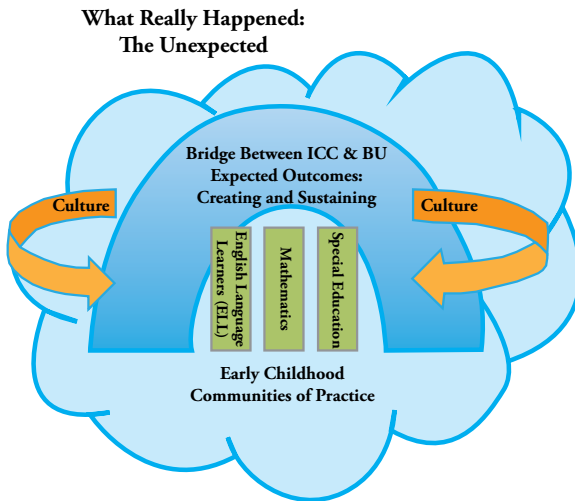
Figure 1. Grant framework and context.

Empowerment Through Communities of Practice

In our project the lived experience of the elements of communities of practice identified by Wenger (1998) were anchored in social theory of learning. Wenger (1998) discusses the importance of practice, community, identity and meaning in relationship to becoming a full member of the established community. In the grant, these ideas were illustrated in *practice in learning* among our two institutions and community stakeholders via meetings, communications, interactions and professional development. In implementing the grant we found that there were several *communities* where individuals and groups evolved through "belonging" whereas the *identity* of participants grew through "becoming." Grant participants interacted at their 2- and 4-year institutions, and together worked to create *meaning* in the context of shared project experiences. An example of this is how teacher candidates and grant personnel began to see themselves as being a part of a bigger community within the ECE profession. Meaningful interactions in a variety of contexts created an empowering space (Siitonen, 1999) where, through positive interactions (Frederickson, 2010), a greater sense of empowerment was experienced. Empowerment is stronger when goals,

context beliefs, capability beliefs, and emotions are involved (Siitonen, 1999) as seen in the *Collaborative empowerment model* in Figure 2.

Purposes	Self-Identity	Environment	Sustainability
Goals	Capability Beliefs	Context Beliefs	Emotions
Grant Expected Outcomes • Connecting BU and ICC Students • ELL Field Experience • Gateways Obtainment • EC Advisory Council • Marketing • Pillars: Mathematics, ELL and EC Special Education	Self-efficacy • Student • Faculty • EC Teacher • EC Administrators • Paraprofessionals • Parents • Early Interventionists	Connections • Institutions • Community • EC Forum • Agencies • Programs (Gateways) • Alignment • Admissions • Outreach • Speakers Bureau • Mentoring	Positivity • Connections (ICC and BU Students) at Conferences • BAEYC students creating materials • World Wide Day of Play • Grant Personnel Presenting/Writing

Empowerment
Creativity, Inspiration, Positivity, Ignition, Democracy, Collaboration, Transformation, Self-Efficacy

Commitment
Commitment to children above your own needs
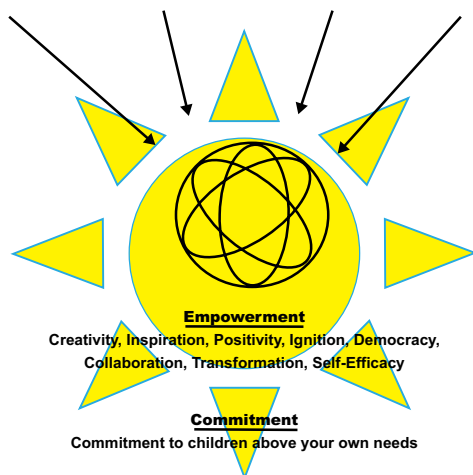
Figure 2. Collaborative empowerment model (Based on Siitonen, 1999. Permission to use March 31, 2016. Oulu, Finland.)

Research Supporting Early Childhood Educators of Central Illinois (ECECI)

The context of ECECI supported empowering processes (Antola Crowe & Kohl, 2007; Siitonen, 1999) in democratic decision-making, collaborative voices, and inhabiting a variety of roles within the larger community of practice (Wenger, 1998) created by our project. In our collaboration, the factors strengthening empowerment were realized (see

Figure 2). For example, the increased sense of empowerment was supported by the project's collaborative design. We took advantage of the benefits of working together to meet additional common needs such as accessing wider geographical groups; integrating needs to better use existing resources; building networks to expand knowledge, good practice and information sharing; and establishing stronger, unified voices, with mutual support between organizations (NCVO Knowhow Nonprofit, 2016). Our collaborative efforts meant the project achieved the desired outcome: students are now garnering the benefits of enhanced articulation between the programs at ICC and BU. For example, classes align, so that transfer program planning is easier. Responding to differences in institutional cultures, emotional needs of students are addressed when they are being recruited to early childhood education and later as they are being advised. The students' improved sense of knowing reduces their stress levels as they no longer need to be concerned about matriculation.

The benefits of collaboration also affected the project team and other professional educators in our area. Most notably through our endeavors, we have evolved into a sustainable group that recognizes the empowerment gained by networking. Like Gulati (1998) we found, "the social networks of prior ties not only influenced the creation of new ties but also affected their design, their evolutionary path, and their ultimate success" (p. 294).

In a similar fashion to early childhood educators' attention to the whole child, education systems, such as high school, community college, and 4-year universities, benefit from addressing the "whole person." Administrative leaders at ICC and BU support efforts to expose students to next-level academics, program-related events, and seamless transitioning through their academic development and achievements. Faculty who were directly involved in writing this grant and developing our partnership created collegial and social strategic alliances with each other and with students, from which our voluntary connections expanded into a network of greater strategic alliances (Gulati, 1998). These include stronger relationships with advisors, deans, curriculum committees, marketing personnel, and inter-institutional classroom visits.

Additionally, ICC and BU recognize that articulation agreements are one aspect of forging a true partnership. The two institutions signed a 2+2 agreement (2 years at ICC, and 2 years at BU to complete a BA), which is now widened to include prospective early childhood education students moving from ICC to BU. The written agreement itself is words on paper (agreements get filed away and/or forgotten with attrition), and does not constitute a living partnership without active, collaborative participation.

Based on our new collective partnership objective, to get students from ICC to BU seamlessly, we sought to establish assurances that greatly increase student preparation and success, academically and socially, through their coursework at Bradley. In order for our partnership to move forward, the beginnings of an active, supportive, and collaborative partnership emerged and grew into an empowered alliance (Siitonen, 1999), and subsequently into a community network (Gulati, 1998; Kisker, 2007) that has strengthened networks of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in which both institutions are welcomed and equal participants with an invitational attitude (Purkey, 2002). In addition, ICC plans to expand their dual-credit early childhood courses at area high schools, and faculty from both institutions plan to join with ECE stakeholders to present the educational and ECE career opportunities available to students at career day events.

The ICC and BU partnership was an opportunity to take existing relationships between our two institutions and greater Peoria area early childhood stakeholders (among them SAL Child Care Connections, Heart of Illinois AEYC, United Way, Bright Futures, and school principals) and deepen our relationships. The project's expected outcomes were focused on strengthening and supporting these community efforts. As can be seen in Figure 1, and discussed previously, our partnership bridged the cultures from ICC and BU through the support of the three pillars of ELL, mathematics and ECSE. It is through the lived moments of our collaborations that our empowering practices grew.

Pillars

A driving force in the development and implementation of the project is the need for highly qualified ECE professionals with ESL endorsements statewide. ICC and BU stakeholders recognize the critical nature of these pillars, related to growing research supporting their importance to child and brain development, as well as responding to societal changes, and changing demographics in the global reality (Framework for 21st Century Skills, 2016).

English Language Learners

The most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (2013-14) shows Illinois has a population of 186,646 English Learners, or 9% of the total population of students in the state. There is a particularly urgent need for early childhood educators who understand how to work with non-English speaking children. Bridges and Dagys (2012) noted that: "less than 6% of the early childhood workforce has training to work with Illinois' growing population of English Language Learners (ELLs)." In addition, Bridges and Dagys (2012) cited that administrators indicated fewer than 25% of current teachers want to obtain the credentials needed for working with students who are linguistically diverse.

The embedding of ESL endorsement requirements into a program of study is not only of great interest to the teacher candidates, it helps address the urgent need for ECE teachers with the knowledge and understanding of how to work effectively with this population of young learners. Bradley's ECE program of study addresses this need by including the necessary requirements for an endorsement in ESL. Furthermore, candidates are able to take two of the six required courses at ICC, which enhances the smooth transition for teacher candidates between the two institutions.

Mathematics

Since 2011, there has been ongoing community collaboration with the Heart of Illinois (HOI) United Way Success By Six-Mathematics, an initiative offering math professional development to educators and workshops for parents. This collaborative project is focused on enhancing the

mathematical knowledge of early childhood teachers. The professional development offered through this project is based on instruction centered on early numeracy foundational skills such as counting, subitizing, and numeral recognition. The curriculum is aligned to Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (ISBE, 2013) and Developmental Guidelines (Clements, 2004, pp. 26–37) recognizing the redesign of Illinois ECE Mathematics Standards to be effective in 2019.

Since this community collaboration was already established, the grant incorporated the professional development materials and key personnel from the HOI United Way, into the implementation of the mathematics component, which enriched communities of practice. *Math: Right from the Start* training provided professional development for pre-service teachers in the spring of 2015, as well as at our fall conference.

Early Childhood Special Education

The Division of Early Childhood (DEC) under the Council for Exceptional Children, the leading organization in the field of special education, recently updated *Recommended Practices* for those working with young children with special needs (DEC, 2014). Critical topic areas include environment, family, and interactions. Early childhood special education (ECSE) practitioners are responsible for providing educational services in the most natural and inclusive environment for the optimal whole child development. Special education practitioners collaborate with families as integral team members and decision makers, and promote sensitive and responsive interactional practices for children's development of language, cognition, and emotional competence (DEC, 2014). The field of ECSE has shifted the focus of practices from a medical model to a family-centered approach, recognizing the importance of family empowerment for the education of young children with special needs (Bowe, 2011). ECSE is a pillar because of our perspective on the whole child and inclusive environments for all children.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model (1989), which views the child and family within the context of a larger social system, the field of ECSE has learned that a family-centered approach, rather than one solely

focusing on the child's disability, enhances the child's optimal development. One practice that implements the above mentioned recommendations in the Peoria community is the Toddler Talk Intervention program, which is a collaboration between a faculty member on the grant team and a professional from Easter Seals, an early intervention agency. Toddler Talk is grounded in the importance of parent-child interactions and the parental role in the child's development (Buschmann, Multhauf, Hasselhorn, & Pietz, 2015). Interaction-based naturalistic language strategies are utilized to help parents promote their child's language development. Results of parent surveys and data on children's progress (Kerr & Lee, 2015) indicate growth in children's language and an increase in parental knowledge and skills related to language development, which points to the importance of preparing pre-service ECE teachers to partner with parents in promoting children's optimal development.

Project Successes: Expected Outcomes

In designing this grant, the team had very specific goals; opportunities for ICC and BU students to work with English learners, an early math workshop, seamless alignment for ECSE approval, ICC's entitlement for Gateways ECE Level 4 Credential (Illinois credentialing system), outreach of programs, creating and sustaining an Advisory Council, and strengthening bonds between ICC and BU students. These goals supported the grant's three pillars: preparing pre-service ECE teachers to work effectively with ELLs, ECE mathematics, and young learners with special educational needs. These goals were realized in the following ways.

One of the first tasks was to analyze, evaluate, and modify related ICC and BU course objectives with grant goals in mind. Every ECE course offered at ICC provides scaffolding to, or directly transfers into Bradley's ECE program. For example, ICC's course on language and literacy development includes objectives related to English learners, and requires at least one field experience in an ELL ECE classroom. Another way in which this goal was supported was through a Literacy Fiesta held at Bradley University. Students enrolled in BU's English Language Learner methods' courses

created and presented activities, suitable for ELLs, to young students, Pre-K through third grade, from two local schools. Additionally, Bradley piloted and then implemented three new field experience courses (totaling 100 hours) to meet ESL endorsement criteria.

The Early Math Workshop on Numeracy for ICC and BU students, conducted in April 2015, was attended by students from both campuses. BU instructors are currently incorporating early mathematics strategies into the early childhood methods course. Additionally, ICC students are regularly invited to BU for early math workshops.

In order to enlighten ICC students to ECSE throughout the curriculum, the grant enabled careful curricular evaluation of ECE programs at both institutions, identifying courses with windows of opportunity to embed material relevant to the ECSE pillar. For example, ICC's Health, Safety and Nutrition and Teaching Diverse Populations courses include relevant information specific to children with special needs. It was important for us to identify ICC courses that address special education content, so students have adequate prior coursework in preparation for more focused ECSE studies when they get to Bradley, thus avoiding "institutional culture shock."

Becoming entitled for Gateways Credentials (required for practitioners and teachers in Illinois) involves an evaluation of courses and may require modifications or development of new courses to align with the credential framework. Level 4 entitlement (earned with an associate degree), which was achieved in the fall of 2015, covered many of the new courses ICC developed to specifically address content areas required of all Gateways Credentials. With entitlement, ICC awards this credential to students who complete an AAS in early childhood education. As a result, ICC certificates/ degree and Gateways ECE Credentials (Levels 2 through 4) are congruent and stackable, so students experience a logical, progressive continuum toward a certificate, transfer, or graduation. In addition, Level 5 credential is achieved at Bradley with a BA degree.

High-school students with an interest in working with young children, students currently seeking an associate degree, and para-professionals

in both rural and urban areas are targeted for efforts to enhance their awareness that early childhood educators are professionals. One vehicle to publicize community awareness of the early childhood professions and educational opportunities is on our ECECI website (www.ececi.org). The website is a clearinghouse of resources and includes information pertinent to becoming an ECE professional and resources for those currently in the field. The website was also used to publicize the ECECI conference, held in November 2015.

Supportive materials includes a brochure to highlight both ICC and BU as pathways to obtaining ECE credentials, an informational bookmark about ICC and BU's programs, and ECECI logo bags as recruitment tools. They were distributed to ICC and BU students, participants of the ECECI conference, community meetings (for example, child care directors' meetings and other early childhood community advisory meetings), gatherings of family care providers, and at outreach visits to high schools.

In large part, our accomplishments were made possible because of an ability to bring together the thoughts, expertise and passion of ECE faculty from both ICC and BU. In addition, based on our belief that our work needed to be as connected as possible to the broader early childhood community, we formed the Advisory Council for ECECI. It is comprised of early childhood professionals including child center directors, school district early childhood professionals, Heart of Illinois Association for the Education of Young Children (HIAEYC), SAL Child Care Connection (SALCCC), United Way, Bright Futures, the Regional Office of Education, and Head Start. At regular meetings we received input from this group that provided current, real-world perspectives to help inform our decision-making as well as our future endeavors.

There were opportunities for students from ICC and BU to become acquainted and communicate with each other about early childhood education, thus creating bonds that included realizations that ICC and BU students are on similar career pathways. Students from both schools were introduced to their counterparts at various events.

Unexpected Outcomes

The substantial take-away from this project describes the shift from tangible tasks to intangible inspiration. Intangible inspiration that built on the pioneering spirit of the Peoria area early childhood community, provided a deepened sense of belonging, purpose, respect, trust, intentionality, perspective-taking, support for each other, creativity, and encouragement due to our common focus on high quality care for the whole child and their families.

We were able to disseminate innovations, strategies, and lessons learned from our partnership, affording members of the grant writing community inspirational energy to interact and build an empowering atmosphere, inviting to other early childhood educators. Methods of dissemination included written work, presentations, showcasing at conferences, and the World Wide Day of Play. Grant members presented at the 2015 National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the 2016 Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) annual conferences. Several members had a publication accepted in the *Teacher Education Yearbook XXV*, entitled "*How a community project has brought us hope, courage and strength in our role as teacher educators*." At the Sharing a Vision: 14th Biennial Conference in Springfield, IL, we, along with ICC and BU students, showcased our work and distributed 450 math activity packets, created by teacher candidates, to ECE professionals from across the state of Illinois.

Our community of practice work culminated in a half-day ECECI conference for 120 attendees and emphasized the three pillars, ELL, math and special education, to early childhood teachers, students, para-professionals, practitioners, agency professionals, high school students and faculty. The event set the stage for shared learning experiences through presentation formats that were interactive, a gallery walk (participants shared thoughts under written topical areas), and a capstone exercise during which attendees collaborated, reflecting the day's experiences. Reflective speaker and breakout sessions were infused and enriched with innovative thoughts and theory utilizing Best Practice strategies (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2012). Candles were lit to stimulate ideas and thoughts about inspiring

children's development; common materials were used to demonstrate math concepts such as sorting and subitizing; employers actively advised attendees about professionalism during interviews; books were made using natural materials; first year teachers addressed their fears and triumphs; and the communicative abilities of toddlers were brought to light. Participants witnessed strong community networks (presenters, agency representatives, faculty) and a shift within the community of practice to advocate for a professional stance within and outside of the early childhood community as explained in the following comment illustrating the elevated experience of being a part of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998):

> *The overall essence of what Early Childhood Best Practice is, the "How" of this ECECI conference was so well orchestrated with the sounds of Early Childhood Culture, Music resonating everywhere! The Early Childhood Beliefs put into ACTION like a well-tuned symphony of learning. Early Childhood is a way of Being the Best we can be and making a difference in the lives of young children and their families.* (Conference participant)

Hallmarks of communities of practice show shared experiences that were created within the context of the project. At tables of eight, participants were provided with sticks and stones to collaboratively create a reflection of the morning's experiences. Some of their powerful summaries are represented in the following statements:

> *Like a dreamcatcher, all of our connections and experiences are intertwined to collect and preserve the dreams and goals that we have for ourselves and our students.*

> *As educators we must stick together, support each other, and have our hearts with our children.*

> *Our goal is to ignite the flame to learning, inspiring, and enriching the greater good.*

> *We came to the conference representing the single rock and then expanded our knowledge and branched out as the conference went on.* (Team summaries of conference participants)

It is difficult to convey excitement and inspiration, but the delight the authors of this chapter felt working together was one of the true intangibles of this project. Our collective journeys are represented by a variety of experiences with young children including mentoring, reflective opportunities, and mechanisms that power long-term sustainability within all quality early childhood programs.

The ECECI Advisory Board plays a pivotal role in sustaining and advancing the work accomplished in our grant such as recruitment, publicity/marketing, mentoring, and a speakers' bureau. The board will guide the grant goals to the next level; our trek together continues to provide a means for like-minded educators to address both on-going and new challenges to everyone involved in early childhood education.

Summary and Recommendations

Communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) inhabit multiple spheres in relation to project participants. Recognizing and articulating the early childhood communities of practice strengthens the professional identities of all involved. Students realize that they belong to a real professional community on a variety of planes. The empowering space of collaboration, specific to our inter-institutional dynamic, deepens with multiple opportunities for interactions within the community. For example, by involving our ECE students in making materials for practicing teachers, participating in meetings, and attending conferences, the grant work added to their growth and strengthened their metacognition.

The common thread through the experience was a growing sense of coming together with energy, purpose, and sense of connection with other communities within the ECE field. We found that an empowered network's strength is anchored in the trust and respect participants have for each other while working for the greater good of children and their families. As grant personnel, we held purposeful meetings supporting on-going collaborations, and meaningful connections were made in the dynamic interactions between participants. What developed was an empowering collaboration, which will have a greater possibility of sustaining itself after the grant ends.

Our work was marked by empowerment (Siitonen, 1999), we respected each other and took ownership of the work with a shared vision. We worked toward social and emotional sustainability creating empowering practices (Antola Crowe & Kohl, 2007) through collaborating, learning to know each other, and understand each others' perspectives, building a stronger community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Internal feelings of empowerment resulted in freedom of action, responsibility, appreciation, confidence, and a positive climate. Thus, in communities of practice, professionals participate in constant reflective practice (Schön, 1987), gleaning from their interactions what works, why it works, and what does not work.

The collaborative empowerment exhibited in our grant work is shown in *Figure 2*. This Collaborative Empowerment Model is based on Siitonen's (1999) work on professional development of teachers. What evolved was a growing sense of empowerment throughout our expanding network of stakeholders: creativity, inspiration, positivity, democratic process, transformations and self-efficacy. The commitment that inspired and encompassed all of our work, was the motivation of putting the needs of children above our own individual and institutional needs. We came together to think about the whole child, the whole faculty, the whole community, the whole student, each whole becoming a part of our accomplishments.

Based on our collaborative experiences, we are sharing the following recommendations. The dynamics of individuals and groups will greatly impact progress, outcomes and sustainability of what is being done and how it is accomplished.

I.   Forge connections and strategic alliances with stakeholders who are able see beyond their own pockets of expertise and who are willing to build larger collective visions together. Empowering collaborative networks will take root as colleagues have a voice, respectful reciprocal relationships, and channels established to use their specific expertise. An area of constraint is time in which to establish connections. This is an issue with which professionals at all levels wrestle. However, the willingness to organize shared experiences in designing, articulating purposes, and solving challenges

is instrumental in successful commitment to supporting families
with young children. Trust engenders the culture of collaboration
within your unique community: give value to the voices and expe-
riences of the people around you.

II. View processes of collaboration holistically with a focus on the
whole child, the whole professional, the whole family, and the
whole community.

III. Create energy that connects teacher candidates to communities of
practice. Promote participation through coursework, events outside
of the classrooms, between institutions, and with the community.

IV. Maintain an active advisory council with varied voices and diverse
representations of the community.

V. Purposefully work toward the activation of different lenses (teach-
er candidates, paraprofessionals, instructors, community entities
and higher education) in designing teacher preparation toward a
professional career. The community of practice can be strength-
ened through shared experiences, such as collaboratively planned
conferences or through social media.

VI. Intentionally work on sustainability of reached goals by reconnect-
ing with inter- and intra-institutional stakeholders consistently so
work is not forgotten or dismissed.

Conclusion

The development of teacher candidates, whose educational paths span two institutions, widens the scope of their professional preparation and self-identity. Interesting questions abound: How does the partnership facilitate the development of community college students' self-identity as they prepare to transfer to a 4-year program? How do the institutions maintain a dynamic connection? How does collaboration evolve as stakeholders join and leave our community of practice while staying committed to children and their families? Over time, evidence of these inquiries will guide our progress through continuous assessment of challenges and successes.

It is imperative that we continue to grow our early childhood community, building networks for long-term sustainability. No challenge should deter us from this mission to ensure our early childhood "being" (Wenger, 1998). No matter where we are in space and time, we need to reflect on existing as a real, authentic and reflective professional community. As early childhood educators we have established a revered and valued culture. To ensure high quality early childhood education programs—the transmission of knowledge, understandings, ideas, best practices, content . . . the way we do things in early childhood culture—all need to be shared, supported and sustained.

References

Antola Crowe, H., & Kohl, J. (2007). Empowering higher education with hopeful advocacy. In T. Kaivola & L. Rohweder (Eds.), *Towards sustainable development in higher education–Reflections* (pp. 50-57). Helsinki: Finland. Ministry of Education and Science 2007: 6.

Bowe, F. G. (2011). *Early childhood special education: Birth to eight*. Clifton Park, NY: Thomson Delmar Learning.

Bridges, M., & Dagys, N. (2012). Who will teach our children?: Building a qualified early childhood workforce to teach English-language learners. *New Journalism on Latino Children*. Institute of Human Development: University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED538869.pdf

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1989). Ecological systems theory. *Annals of Child Development, 6*, 187-249.

Buschmann, A., Multhauf, B., Hasselhorn, M., & Pietz, J. (2015). Long-term effects of a parent-based language intervention on language outcomes and working memory for late talking toddlers. *Journal of Early Intervention, 37*, 175-189.

Clements, D. H. (2004). Major themes and recommendations. In D. H. Clements & J. Sarama (Eds.), *Engaging young children in mathematics: Standards for early childhood mathematics education* (pp. 7–72). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Division for Early Childhood. (2014). *DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014*. Retrieved from http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices

Framework For 21St Century Skills. Retrieved from http://www.p21.org/overview

Frederickson, B. (2010). *Positivity*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.

Gulati, R. (1998). Alliances and networks. *Strategic Management Journal,* 19, 293-317.

Illinois State Board of Education. (2013). *Illinois early learning and development standards*. Retrieved from www.isbe.state.il.us/.../pdf/early_learning_standards.pdf

Kerr, C., & Lee, H. (2015, October). *Promoting enhanced communication through play-based parent-child group*. Presented at the DEC's 31st Annual International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families. Atlanta, Georgia.

Kisker, C. B. (2007). Creating and sustaining community college - university transfer partnerships. *Community College Review, 34*(4), 282-301.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2013-2014). *Illinois state snapshop*. Retrieved from http://eddataexpress.ed.gov/state-report.cfm/tab/sd/state/IL

NCVO Knowhow Nonprofit. (2016). *Benefits and risks of collaborative working*. Retrieved from https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/collaboration/what_is_collaboration/benefits_and_risks_of_collaboration

Purkey, W. (2002). Foreword. In J. J. Schmidt, *Intentional helping: A philosophy for proficient caring relationships* (pp. V-VI). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill, Prentice Hall.

Schön, D. A. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner: Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Siitonen, J. (1999). *Voimaantumisteorian perusteiden hahmottelua*. Acta Universitatis Ouluensis E 37. Scientiae Rerum Socialium. Oulu, Finland: Oulu University.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice. Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Zemelman, S., Daniels, H. S., & Hyde, A. (2012). *Best practice. Bringing standards to life in America's classrooms*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Partnership Description

Lewis University is a comprehensive Catholic institution located approximately 30 miles south of Chicago, Illinois. Lewis serves nearly 7,000 undergraduate and graduate students of all cultures and religious faiths, with a 32% minority population. The early childhood education program is housed in the College of Education. Completion of the initial licensure program at both the Bachelor and Master's level confers endorsements in early childhood education, early childhood special education, and bilingual/ESL.

Joliet Junior College is the nation's first public community college, and serves more than 35,000 students with a 38% minority enrollment. Located 14 miles southwest of Lewis University, it is Lewis' largest transfer "feeder" institution. The Education Department is housed within Social and Behavioral Sciences, and offers an AAS in Child Development and three early childhood certificate programs. A child development lab school is housed on the main campus.

Kankakee Community College serves nearly 8,000 undergraduate and continuing education students, primarily from the rural region 60 miles south of Chicago. KCC is comprised of 32.8% minority students. The Child Development program is housed in the Business/Technology Division and offers an AAS degree and Advanced Certificates in Child Development.

Waubonsee Community College serves over 14,000 students on multiple campuses within a 624-square-mile district in northern Illinois. Early Childhood Education is housed in the Social Sciences, Education and World Languages Division, and offers five certificates and an AAS in Early Childhood Education.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

Joliet Junior College: Fast Facts: http://www.jjc.edu/institutional-research/Pages/fast-facts.aspx

Kankakee Community College: Fact Sheet: http://www.kcc.edu/Community/Collegeinfo/ie/ir/databook/Documents/FACT_SHEET_2016.pdf

Lewis University: About Us: http://lewisu.edu/welcome/facts.htm

Waubonsee Community College: Fast Facts (2016) Retrieved August 6, 2016 from https://www.waubonsee.edu/about/facts/index.php

CHAPTER 8

Shifting the Balance: Re-Envisioning Early Childhood Educator Preparation Design Through Meaningful Collaboration

Rebecca Pruitt, Carla Diez, Kari Livesey, and Melissa Szymczak

Key Words: 2+2 agreement, Associate in Applied Science, Bachelor of Arts, collaboration, community, diversity, field experience, non-licensure, parallel design, partnerships, power, transfer

Overview of Childhood Educator Preparation Design Through Meaningful Collaboration

Early childhood teacher education (ECTE) is currently receiving unprecedented levels of focused attention (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2010; Couse & Recchia, 2016; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Nelson, Main, & Kushto-Hoban, 2012), providing a rapidly expanding knowledge base for teacher educators. In reviewing the landscape of ECTE, a key issue that repeatedly rises to the top is the need for meaningful collaborative work between 2- and 4-year higher education institutions in order to close gaps in student preparation and support. Recommendations for improvement are disseminated and deliberated as teacher educators and professionals serving young children and families become increasingly aware of such issues. Specifically, higher education programs are being called upon to develop more effective partnerships with one another, with those directly serving young children and families, and with providers of in-service professional development

(Couse & Recchia, 2016; Hyson, Horm, & Winton, 2012; Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015; Nelson et al., 2012). As teacher educators from four separate higher learning institutions serving early childhood students in northern Illinois (Lewis University [4-year institution] and three 2-year institutions: Kankakee Community College, Joliet Junior College and Waubonsee Community College), we sought to address the need for strengthened partnerships in our own context through collaborative development of new educational pathways.

The viability of a meaningful partnership among these institutions became clear early on, not only because of geographical proximity, but because the strengths of each program provided a solid foundation on which to build a productive partnership. Each of the community colleges prepares early childhood professionals (Joliet Junior College, 2016; Kankakee Community College, 2015; Waubonsee Community College, 2016) and their diverse graduates can be considered a positive addition to the learning community at the undergraduate/graduate partnership school (Lewis University). As an institution serving a student population that includes many transfer students, Lewis University has the infrastructure to support the needs of both traditional and non-traditional adult students (Lewis University, 2016b). Designed accordingly from its inception, Lewis' early childhood teacher education program offers professional education requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Special Education degree through multiple formats. For each course offered, students have the option of either a daytime traditional course section or an evening course section. Evening courses are designed for adult working students, and many are hybrid courses, in which class sessions are delivered in both face-to-face and online formats (Lewis University, 2016a). Therefore, the creation of new degree completion pathways that would meet the needs of non-traditional transferring adult students was a challenging but attainable goal. More than a year of collaboration resulted in the development of three fully aligned degree completion plans (AAS to BA) and stronger partnerships among our institutions, that we believe will better serve the educational needs of our students.

Significance and Background

Increased attention devoted to the reform of early childhood teacher education is now being considered a "national outcry" (Couse & Recchia, 2016, p. 387) that represents a "dramatic shift from earlier decades" (Whitebrook & Austin, 2015, p. 1). This call for reform stems from an urgent need to increase the quality of educational experiences for our most vulnerable children, thus demanding a well-informed understanding of how teachers of young children are best prepared (Couse & Recchia, 2016; Whitebrook & Austin, 2015).

A comprehensive report on the current state of early childhood workforce preparation was released in 2015 by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC). The report includes key recommendations that confirm and build upon the long-held goal of early childhood teacher education programs to align with the science of child development and early learning. In addition, the report advocates for field based experiences in child care center and school classrooms for ECTE students, thus providing opportunities to translate theory into practice. Cross-institutional relationships and partnerships with other community "practice settings" such as early intervention professionals, family support service providers, etc. are also emphasized in the report as imperative in improving the quality of higher learning experiences (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 525). One of the key recommendations of the IOM report is a transition to a minimum bachelor degree requirement for all lead educators working with children birth through age 8. To this end, proposed under Recommendation 5, is the establishment of agreements among 2- and 4-year colleges (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). Authentic collaborative program development among faculty across institutions is described as an essential component of the process. The primary intent of these partnerships would be the creation of formal articulation agreements to reduce duplication of program requirements during the scale-up from an associate degree to a bachelor degree. A coordinated effort to collaboratively design and assess coursework and field experiences is considered crucial to ensuring quality

and consistency. (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 528).

The recommendation for requiring a bachelor degree with specialized knowledge of early childhood content and related competencies has been gathering support in recent years. Based on current research in child development and practitioner preparation (Barnett, Carolan, Squires, Clarke Brown, & Horowitz, 2015; Bueno, Darling-Hammond, & Gonzalez, 2010; Fuligni, Howes, Lara-Cinisomo, & Karoly, 2009), such proposals suggest specific content and methods to include in early childhood education programs. While there is some variation in organization and description of important elements, the collective voice generally confirms and builds upon a long-standing structure of early childhood education (ECE) programs, though quality and implementation also vary widely across institutions (Couse & Recchia, 2016; Fuligni et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2012; Whitebrook & Austin, 2015). As described by the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council (2015), components of a high quality ECE program fall into three categories: foundational theories of development and learning, subject matter content, and methods of teaching and pedagogy (p. 386). Field experiences that include "documented demonstration of mastery of practice" are also reported as integral in effective implementation of a quality ECE program (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 520).

As the population of the United States continues to grow more culturally and linguistically diverse, particularly in the state of Illinois in and around the Chicago metropolitan area (Heineke, Kennedy, & Lees, 2013, p. 1), it is critically important that our teacher education programs increase candidates' ability to meet the various needs of the ECE population. (Couse & Recchia, 2016; Heineke et al., 2013; Thorp & Sánchez, 2013). Teacher educators must also focus efforts on the recruitment of teacher candidates with diversified linguistic and cultural knowledge who can draw from firsthand community experiences to work more effectively with children and families (Nelson et al., 2012; Couse & Recchia, 2016, p. 418). Receiving transfer students from community colleges that serve a more

diverse student population is one way universities can increase diversity in bachelor-level teacher education programs. Formal articulation agreements between community colleges and universities can facilitate the recruitment of these transfer students by enacting transferability of coursework between associate and bachelor degrees (Couse & Recchia, 2016; Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). However, the alignment of coursework is only one part of what is needed to effectively support students in accomplishing their degree completion goal. When transitioning between the community college to the university, there are many barriers over and above transferability of coursework. Vicki Garavuso writes in her chapter in *Handbook of Early Childhood Teacher Education* (Garavuso, 2016) about multiple obstacles that must be overcome by adult learners. Describing situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers, Garavuso presents the many personal obligations, beliefs and attitudes, and financial situations that must be overcome to successfully complete a bachelor degree. Situational barriers include any responsibilities beyond their studies, such as caring for family, managing finances, holding down jobs, etc. Dispositional barriers include beliefs about their own relationship to schooling, which have been shaped by prior experiences in under-resourced contexts. While many do experience high levels of community and familial support, future ECE teachers' cultural capital can differ significantly from that which defines success in higher learning institutions. Institutional barriers include prohibitive class scheduling, limited work hours of college staff, and program field experience requirements that conflict with work schedules (Couse & Recchia, 2016, pp. 419-423).

The necessity for collaborative work, between and among institutions, to effectively address all of the considerations described here compels us to explore what marks a true collaboration. Alignment of programs for articulation has traditionally been approached as a "top down" endeavor, controlled primarily by the 4-year faculty (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 385). As shown in research about relations between schools and families (Amatea, Mixon, & McCarthy, 2013), understanding and addressing issues of power is key to determining the

quality of the relationship and consequently the authenticity of the collaboration. The natural tendency of the power holder may be to approach the collaboration as more of a remediation, in which the more influential member (in this case, the 4-year institution) works with the other members primarily in ways that focus on getting them "up to speed" rather than engaging with them in a way that respects and seeks to build upon all that they and their students bring to the table (Amatea et al., 2013). Until and unless we are willing to address these issues within our institutional and community partnerships, we will limit our ability to fully implement such collaboration.

Partnership Development

The imperative is clear. States must support the ongoing work of higher education in creating a more cohesive and aligned system of professional development in order to implement the lofty recommendations outlined in this chapter (Nelson et al., 2012). Illinois' commitment to distribute federal grant funding to support the work of early childhood teacher education programs demonstrates real movement from "rhetoric" to "reality" (Couse & Recchia, 2016, p. 27) in our state's early childhood workforce advocacy efforts. As recipients of these funds, our consortium of four faculty members from four different institutions sought to address these recommendations through a collaborative, value-added approach that emphasized the development of meaningful partnerships to support and sustain our work.

Engaging with Community Partners

Each of the four partners in our consortium has developed affiliations with local schools, child care centers, and other local providers of early childhood education and family support services. These include community child care resource and referral agencies, Head Start programs, early childhood collaborative networks, early intervention providers, private child care centers, high school vocational child care teachers, and public elementary schools. While the quality and depth of these relationships vary from site to site, with several having long-standing and productive partnerships, many can serve as field experience sites for pre-service teachers, and/

or hire graduates from our programs. Some of these organizations benefit from faculty support regarding professional development for their staff. Such relationships have been established over time through faculty service on advisory boards, membership of various committees, and the hosting of conferences. We reached out to these community partners for feedback on program development based on their expertise in supporting the growth and improvement of practicing professionals. We received 70 responses from two online surveys that we collaboratively designed to answer specific questions related to the preparation of early childhood professionals. The feedback was immensely valuable in informing our work, as these partners shared their perspective on preparedness of employees in general, and specifically, as it relates to their higher education experiences.

Our engagement with community partners for program design feedback brought the added benefit of opening up opportunities for new avenues to close the gap between pre-service and in-practice professional learning. One example is the identification of a shared partnership with a statewide early intervention provider. Each of the three community college early childhood programs partners with this organization to provide free preschool screenings to families in their local area, while allowing early childhood students to observe and participate in the process as a field-based learning experience. Lewis University has now added this organization as a partner and is providing the described service to local families and the learning experience to early childhood education students. In this way, we are closing the gap in service to families needing free preschool screenings, while creating a seamless pathway for transferring students by providing innovative transferable field-based learning experiences.

Teacher Preparation Partnerships: Scaling Up Through Parallel Design

The development of meaningful pathways, that allow early childhood professionals to move seamlessly and flexibly from one step to the next in their educational journey, is an idea that enjoys widespread support (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015; Nelson et al., 2012). Transitioning this idea into reality was especially daunting for us in

light of the various challenges we faced in aligning program components. As a program that prepares teacher candidates for both general and special education, and that embeds additional coursework to confer an endorsement in English as a Second Language, the Lewis University Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education is large and dense, with 60 credit hours in professional education requirements. Our decision to align this BA licensure program with an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree from each of the three other institutions within the consortium complicated the process even further, because of the limited number of general education courses required to obtain each of these AAS degrees. However, we maintained our commitment to the AAS students in particular, as they typically are those that have already demonstrated a commitment to the field of early childhood and are more closely connected with early childhood faculty as mentors. This viewpoint was corroborated by advisors from each campus who confirmed that such students were the most likely to be supported by an articulation agreement.

Our collective commitment created the foundation for our developing partnership. Understanding that a true collaborative effort requires sharing of power and well defined leadership roles (Amatea et al., 2013), we divided our work into specific areas of focus for which each partner would provide leadership and accountability. Applying a strengths-based and multi-directional approach to alignment and redesign, we also identified partners that had demonstrated particular strengths in one of the key areas of need: infant/toddler care and education, early math learning, and supporting culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. Identifying a lead partner for each of these key areas enabled us to maintain our focus throughout the design and alignment process.

The primary goal of our work was to redesign and align an Associate of Applied Science degree from each of the three community college programs with the Lewis University Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education. Our goal of leveraging the alignment process to develop meaningful relationships among the institutions was supported by multiple considerations. Foremost was the rejection of the traditional "top-down

system in which the articulation effort is controlled by the 4-year university" (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 385). Also guiding the alignment process was our desire to "reduce duplication during the scale-up" to the bachelor degree (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 529) and to develop a 2+2 course of study that facilitated the development of core knowledge in child development and learning, pedagogy, and subject-matter "in parallel rather than sequentially" (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 526) by rejecting the traditional "learn and then do" plan of study (Couse & Recchia, 2016, p. 51). True to the reputation of 2-year early childhood programs in general (Couse & Recchia, 2016), each of the three community college programs provided a plan of study for the preparation of early childhood professionals that included coursework and experiences in all three of the recommended categories: foundational theories of development and learning, subject matter content, and methods of teaching and pedagogy (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). Therefore, the risk of "duplication during the scale up" (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 529) was high during the alignment process. As stated previously, the content embedded in the BA licensure program to confer three full endorsements in early childhood general education, early childhood special education, and English as a second language complicated this issue even further, as some courses commonly considered transferable by other 4-year institutions contained embedded components not present in the 2-year versions of the course. After much deliberation and discussion of depth and rigor, endorsement components, and taking some cues from the Illinois Articulation Initiative, we identified the coursework and experiences from each AAS program that were the most likely to qualify as duplicates in the BA licensure program. In some instances, this meant counting more than one course at the 2-year level as a duplication of only one course at the 4-year level. Focusing our efforts on developing a parallel rather than sequential plan of study (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015, p. 526) provided a structure that informed these decisions, as we were free to acknowledge the

value of learning content, theory, and pedagogy throughout the entire plan of study at various levels of application.

This process yielded some expected (and some unexpected) results in course transfer and revision. Once duplicate courses had been identified as described above, and general education requirements accounted for in a year-by-year plan, a view of the trajectory for transferring students came into view. For example, all students within our plan will complete an introductory course in child growth and development as part of their community college coursework. Building on this knowledge base, they will then accomplish a more in-depth study of multiple areas of development (language, math/science, social-emotional) during their completion of the final two years of the plan, as well as engage in a more comprehensive application of theory to practice in field experiences and student teaching. The same trajectory is followed in relation to child observation and assessment. Non-transferring LU students will now take a three-credit hour course in early childhood observation and assessment at an introductory level that was not offered before, as this content was previously embedded within other courses and field work. All of this enables students (both transfer and non-transfer) to progress on a similar trajectory regarding content and depth, and provides the LU non-transferring student with added content and practice in infant/toddler development and care, an original goal of the project (see Table 1).

Field based experiences are a critical component of any pre-service education program (Bueno et al., 2010; Couse & Recchia, 2016; Heineke & Lees, 2013; Thorp & Sánchez, 2013). This was corroborated very explicitly and conclusively in the feedback we received from our community partners, given the previously described survey. Specifically mentioned by the vast majority of the respondents was the need for experience with diverse children and families, familiarity applying theory to practice, and well developed soft skills (personality traits, goals, motivations, and preferences) (Heckman & Kautz, 2012). Therefore an examination of all field and clinical practice experiences is an important part of our collaborative work.

Prior to our work on this project, the LU bachelor program rarely accepted field experience hours for transfer credit. This had been a source of discouragement for many entering students who have completed meaningful field experiences within a community college program. So the question was raised: How do we accept field experiences as transfer credit and still adequately prepare candidates for the rigorous and specific demands required for licensure, including adequate experience related to the three endorsements of Early Childhood (EC), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), and English as a Second Language (ESL)? Again, the answer came through reducing duplication and adopting a parallel rather than sequential approach to the plan of study. As a result of this process, it was determined that completion of the final internship within the capstone course of each community college program could align well with initial field experience hours completed toward the bachelor degree. This meant that a duplication could be eliminated.

In feedback from over 70 community partners, it was overwhelmingly confirmed that the quality of field-based experience is critically important. According to respondents, candidates must have experiences in diverse and inclusive settings, and receive appropriate guidance that will facilitate growth in applying theory to practice. Based on our view that this facilitation depended greatly on the classroom mentor teacher's influence, we developed an innovative online training module that mentor teachers could access and complete prior to accepting a student. This module contains information on areas that have been shown to be most effective in enhancing the quality of the experience for candidates, such as building mentor-mentee relationships, productive communication, and constructive assessment of pre-service teachers. The module is structured to gather pre and post self-reports of mentor efficacy by institution. This element of the project has proven to be one of the more innovative and exciting results of our collaboration, as it demonstrates a meaningful collaborative endeavor and facilitates a deeper level of alignment among the community college capstone internships and the university initial field experience previously described.

Table 1

Parallel Design for Pre-Service Teacher Observation and Assessment Competencies

COURSES	Completed at community college prior to transfer:	Completed at university following transfer and prior to final semester of student teaching:	
	• Child Study and Observation • Child Growth & Development	• Assessment of Diverse Learners • Early Childhood Inclusive Instructional Methods	• Early Reading & Writing Methods • Science & Mathematics Content, Development & Methods • Early Primary Inclusive Methods
THEORY "learn"*	Identify appropriate observation methods and screening tools.	• Identify appropriate observation methods and screening tools. - *Understand considerations unique to children with exceptionalities and dual language learners.* - *Critique and analyze assessments.*	• Identify observation methods and screening tools. • Understand considerations unique to children with exceptionalities and dual language learners. • Critique and analyze assessments. - *re: literacy, math, science learning.*
	Identify culturally, linguistically, and age appropriate informal and formal assessments.	• Identify culturally, linguistically, and age appropriate informal and formal assessments. - *Identify equity and fairness issues in test selection and administration.* - *Critique and analyze assessments.*	• Identify culturally, linguistically, and age appropriate informal and formal assessments. • Identify equity and fairness issues in test selection and administration. • Critique and analyze assessments. - *re: literacy, math, science learning.*

Table 1 (cont.)

COURSES	Completed at community college prior to transfer:	Completed at university following transfer and prior to final semester of student teaching:	
THEORY (cont.)	Integrate observation/ assessment results with developmental theory.	• Integrate observation/ assessment results with developmental theory. - *Integrate contextual factors including home language.* - *Plan instruction based on analyzed assessment results.*	• Integrate observation/ assessment results with developmental theory. • Integrate contextual factors including home language. • Plan instruction based on analyzed assessment results. - *re: literacy, math, science learning.*
PRACTICE "do"*	**Child Study Portfolio** Observe and assess child (0-3yrs). Create a portfolio incorporating above elements.	**Curriculum Plan** • Observe/assess children in classroom (3-5 yrs). Implement curriculum plan incorporating above elements.	**RTI Case Study** • Assess primary student re: Response to Intervention process. **"Practice" edTPA (complete)**

* (Couse & Recchia, 2016, p. 51)

Results and Future Plans

The alignment efforts described here resulted in a true 2+2 placement of each of the three community college AAS programs with the BA licensure program of the 4-year university. An additional pathway was added with the recent approval of a new non-licensure BA, and 2+2 alignment plans have been developed for transferring into this degree plan as well. To complete the bachelor degree under these plans, all students will complete the same courses and field work during year three. In year four, students may transition to the smaller non-licensure program and possibly complete hours toward a minor as well. Interviews with admissions counselors and transfer specialists at all four campuses enlightened us to needs of transferring students (e.g., money, time, and other issues), particularly those seeking a career in early education. This feedback continues to guide us as we develop web pages and print resources to support the work of these advisors.

Understanding that the cohort model has proven successful for adult transferring students in early childhood (Kipnis, Whitebrook, Almaraz, Sakai, & Austin, 2012), we are exploring options for utilizing the multiple sites of each of our campuses to host the final four or five semesters of the 2+2 plan. For example, Waubonsee Community College has a campus in downtown Aurora where they currently house a robust cohort of diverse early childhood students as well as an early childhood center. This location can be used to support students' continuing education by enabling them to take the majority of their remaining courses from Lewis faculty on the same site. Because this location may be closer for some transferring from Joliet Junior College, the option would be open for those students as well. Additionally, since Aurora may offer rich diversity in its schools and community agencies, this arrangement would also allow established field experience sites (for student teaching and internships) to be utilized throughout the remainder of the program.

Conclusion and Recommendations

We believe our work can inform other efforts toward building more productive and meaningful relationships among higher learning institutions, who prepare the early childhood workforce (Couse & Recchia, 2016; Whitebrook & Austin, 2015). The primary work of this collaborative process was to go beyond the traditional top-down remedial paradigm articulation agreement (Amatea et al., 2013; Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015) by creating a plan that honored the life experience and educational achievements of transferring students, and built solid partnerships along the way. Our commitment to this standard led our process and informed our plan, and we look forward to continued work in strengthening our partnerships among one another as well as partnerships with early childhood education and family service providers in our community. We hope our process successfully shifts the balance toward a more shared and truly collaborative experience, one that will result in benefits for our pre-service teachers and ultimately the children and families they serve. There are many avenues to follow in extending this work, both logistically and relationally, as we continue to strive toward the breaking down of situational, dispositional, and institutional barriers that continue to stand in the way of a truly seamless pathway (Couse & Recchia, 2016, pp. 419-423).

References

Amatea, E. S., Mixon, K., & McCarthy, S. (2013). Preparing teachers to collaborate with families: Contributions of family systems counselors to a teacher preparation program. *The Family Journal, 21*(2), 136-145.

American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. (2010). *21st century knowledge and skills in educator preparation*. Washington, DC: Author.

Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Squires, J. H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). *The state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Bueno, M., Darling-Hammond, L., & Gonzalez, D. (2010). *A matter of degrees: Preparing teachers for the pre-K classroom*. Washington, DC: Pew Center on the States. Retrieved from http://www.pewtrusts.org/~/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/reports/pre-k_education/pkneducationreformseriesfinalpdf.pdf

Couse, L. J., & Recchia, S. L. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of early childhood teacher education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Fuligni, A. S., Howes, C., Lara-Cinisomo, S., & Karoly, L. (2009). Diverse pathways in early childhood professional development: An exploration of early educators in public preschools, private preschools, and family child care homes. *Early Education Development, 20*(3), 507–526. DOI: 10.1080/10409280902783483

Garavuso, V. (2016). Reimagining teacher education to attract and retain the early childhood workforce: Addressing the needs of the "nontraditional" student. In L. J. Couse and S. L. Recchia (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood teacher education* (pp. 181-194). New York, NY: Routledge.

Heckman, J. J., & Kautz, T. D. (2012). *Hard evidence on soft skills* (Working Paper 18121). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from http://www.nber.org/papers/w18121

Heineke, A., Kennedy, A. S., & Lees, A. (2013). Preparing early childhood educators for the culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms and communities of Illinois. *Early Childhood Research & Practice, 15*(2), n.p.

Hyson, M., Horm, D. M., & Winton, P. J. (2012). Higher education for early childhood educators and outcomes for young children: Pathways toward greater effectiveness. In R. Pianta, L. Justice, S. Barnett, & S. Sheridan (Eds.), *Handbook of early education* (pp. 553-583). New York, NY: Guildord Press.

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi:10.17226/19401

Joliet Junior College. (2016). *Child development, A.A.S.* Retrieved from http://catalog.jjc.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=4&poid=700&returnto=84

Kankakee Community College. (2015). *Early childhood, ATT.* Retrieved from http://smartcatalog.co/en/Catalogs/Kankakee-Community-College/2016-2017/2016-2017-Academic-Catalog/Program-Requirements/Transfer-Programs/Early-Childhood-AAT

Kipnis, F., Whitebrook, M., Almaraz, M., Sakai, L., & Austin, L. J. E. (2012). *Learning together: A study of six B.A. completion cohort programs in early care and education: Year 4.* Berkeley, CA: University of California, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

Lewis University. (2016a). *Early childhood special education w/ English as a second language (ESL) endorsement, B.A.* Retrieved from http://www.lewisu.edu/academics/earlychildhood/index.htm

Lewis University. (2016b). *News release: Lewis University ranked 14th among best colleges for adults.* Retrieved from http://www.lewisu.edu/news/newsarticle.htm?PArticleID=9817#.V8ssKzUerfc

Nelson, C. C., Main, C., & Kushto-Hoban, J. (2012). *Breaking it down and building it out: Enhancing collective capacity to improve early childhood teacher preparation in Illinois.* Chicago, IL: University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Education.

Thorp, E. K., & Sánchez, S. Y. (2013). Infusing cultural and linguistic diversity into preservice and inservice preparation. In P. J. Winton, J. A. McCollum, & C. Catlett (Eds.), *Preparing effective professionals: Evidence and applications in early childhood and early intervention.* Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE Press.

Waubonsee Community College. (2016). *Early childhood education: Associate in applied science.* Retrieved from https://www.waubonsee.edu/learning/academics/career/childhood/570/index.php

Whitebrook, M., & Austin, L. J. E. (2015). *Early childhood higher education: Taking stock across the states.* Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, Center for the Study of Child Care Employment.

Partnership Description

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), located in the twin cities of Champaign and Urbana, is a doctoral research university. It is consistently ranked as a top university, both nationally and internationally. The enrollment is over 45,000, drawing from all 50 states and over 100 countries. The small early childhood program at UIUC focuses on the development of leaders and change agents within the field of early childhood education.

Parkland College is a 2-year public institution, classified as High Career & Technical/High Nontraditional. Parkland enrolls over 20,000 students annually, with 75% of students coming from community college District 505. The early childhood program supports working students in the community, many of whom are already employed in local early childhood programs.

UIUC and Parkland College began their 2015 partnership project with an articulation agreement already in place. Instead, the project has focused on building relationships between the two campuses and enhancing both programs through a stronger and more cohesive emphasis on investigative pedagogies with emergent curricula, such as Reggio Emilia, Project Approach, and developmentally appropriate mathematics pedagogy. To enhance our work in this project UIUC and Parkland have sought the expertise of partners from Chicago Commons, the Erikson Institute, and St. Ambrose University.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

Carnegie Classification: http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/

Parkland College: http://www.parkland.edu/about/quickfacts.aspx

The Times Higher Education: World University Rankings: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign: http://illinois.edu/about/facts.html

U.S. News and World Report: Education Rankings: http://www.usnews.com/rankings

CHAPTER 9

Working Together to Support Math Pedagogy: It All Adds Up for Students

Stephanie C. Sanders-Smith and Nancy Gaumer

Key Words: community, early childhood math, partnerships, Project Approach, Reggio Emilia

Overview

The primary goal of this project was to rebuild relationships between faculty and teacher candidates in the early childhood programs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and Parkland College. The two programs teach different student populations, but the graduates of our two programs target very similar populations of high-need children and families. Both programs have historically had some alignment with the Project Approach (described in following sections) and faculty at both programs were interested in incorporating elements of the Reggio Emilia Approach (also described in following sections) into teacher education. We decided rather than focus only on the articulation work (which has been ongoing), we would build relationships around the Reggio Emilia approach and use the approach to teach mathematics methods and pre-service teacher candidates. In this way, we were able to target all candidates in both programs—not only candidates who will be transferring to UIUC from Parkland, but also students who will complete an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree and/or certificate at Parkland and go directly into the field, and students at UIUC who did not transfer from another institution.

We believe that it is important that our two institutions have continuity in practice for all of our graduates, as many will find themselves working together in the community.

Background and Significance

The Reggio Emilia Approach is located in and named for an Italian city in the Emilia-Romagna region of northern Italy (Tarr, 2001). The first Reggio school was built after World War II with proceeds from the sale of tanks, trucks, and horses. That school, under the direction of Loris Malaguzzi, welcomed children of all socioeconomic levels (Gandini, 1993). While the program was (and is) Italian, its foundations were in American progressivism, primarily the work of John Dewey (Dewey, 1902/1915/2001; Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 1996). The pedagogy also draws on the work of Piaget and Vygotsky (Flavell, 1963; Gandini,1993; Vygotsky, 1979).

Reggio Emilia is based on twelve fundamentals (Gandini, 1993). These are: (1) image of the child, (2) children's relationships and interactions, (3) role of parents, (4) amenable school, (5) time not set by the clock, (6) teachers and children as partners, (7) cooperation between teachers as a foundation, (8) interdependence of cooperation and organization between teachers and parents, (9) emergent curriculum, (10) projects, both short and long term, (11) visual arts-trained teachers and a workshop in the school, and (12) power of documentation. The foundation of the twelve fundamentals is the first—the image of the child, which encompasses a deep understanding of children's abilities and respect for children's work and ideas (Haigh, 1997).

The Reggio Emilia approach is strongly contextual and very much part of the local culture of the city of Reggio Emilia (Tarr, 2001). A program outside of Italy that incorporates the fundamentals of Reggio Emilia is said to be "Reggio Emilia-inspired." Unlike Montessori or Waldorf, there is no official training or certification for teachers, nor is there an official accreditation for schools and programs. Furthermore, teachers who are inspired to use Reggio practices are often not in schools that support these practices appropriately. Reggio Emilia requires a great deal of professional

collaboration and support (Edwards et al., 1996; Scheinfeld, Haigh, & Scheinfield, 2008). Thus, schools that have adopted the fundamentals of Reggio Emilia as a program-wide philosophy are often able to provide professional development and collaboration around curriculum and pedagogy to a greater extent than schools without such a clearly unified philosophy (Smith, 2015).

In 1968, Dr. Lilian Katz came to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as an assistant professor. She has worked closely with faculty at both UIUC and Parkland College throughout her career to support effective early childhood pedagogy. Katz is well-known in the early childhood community for her work in the Project Approach, a pedagogic method that uses project work for in-depth studies of particular topics by groups of children, either an entire class or a group within a class (Katz & Chard, 2000). Similarly to Reggio Emilia, Katz identifies this approach as drawing from Progressive Education, particularly from the work of John Dewey (Dewey, 1902/1915/2001; Helm & Katz, 2011). Katz notes that the use of the project in Reggio Emilia and other progressive methods shows the power of the work. The project allows children to make deeper and fuller sense of an event or phenomena that exists in their environment and that is worthy of their attention (Katz, 1996). Such work unpacks and de-familiarizes commonplace and everyday objects and opens them up to deep investigation. At UIUC and Parkland College, Reggio Emilia and Project Approach are often incorporated together, with Reggio Emilia-inspired practice used as an overarching teaching philosophy and Project Approach employed to structure the project element that is part of both approaches. This can be seen in practice in the University Primary School at UIUC.

As a result of Katz's influence and the Champaign-Urbana community's historic role in the development of early childhood education as both a professional field and an academic discipline (ECAP Collaborative, n.d.; Spodek, 2009), the foundations of the Project Approach and Reggio Emilia have deep roots in both of our institutions. However in the last two decades, the relationship between the early childhood programs at the two institutions has waned. While the two programs have never been completely out

of touch with each other, disparate program foci (national and international research at UIUC, local practice at Parkland college) have reduced our partnership, making it difficult for us to work together to provide services to our community. It was the goal of this project to begin to rebuild relationships with a refocus on Reggio-inspired practice and the project work. In short, we wish to return to our influential past.

Building Partnerships Through Early Childhood Math

For this project, we chose to focus specifically on early childhood mathematics. Mathematics pedagogy, in both programs, was not as developed as pedagogy in other disciplines, such as language arts, science, or art. Researchers from the Erikson Institute (Erikson, 2016) have found that, while teachers believe that math education is appropriate for young children, teachers report a varying levels of confidence in teaching math and in their own personal math knowledge (Chen, McCray, Adams, & Leow, 2013). Anecdotally, we have noticed that many of our own students have voiced hesitancy with regard to teaching math as well as some misconceptions about what concepts should be taught to young children. The Erikson Institute (2014), through work with teachers in the Chicago Public Schools and Chicago Head Start programs, has developed a "Big Ideas" approach to teaching mathematics concepts to young children in an investigative manner. We found this method of mathematics pedagogy to be complementary to Reggio Emilia and Project Approach.

The project discussed in this chapter was very different from many other 2- and 4-year collaborative projects because of the historic relationship between UIUC and Parkland College. We had an articulation agreement in place already, so there was no need to build one. We were aware of each other already. Early childhood education is a tight community in Champaign-Urbana; everyone knows everyone. The first author was new to town, but was quickly introduced to many of the key players.

As is the case between many 2- and 4-year institutions, there is a large cultural divide between the two schools. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is an internationally recognized research institution with students from across the country and around the world—but very few

from the local area. Parkland College is more grounded in the immediate community and serves local students. Many UIUC students are top students in high school and are ready for rigorous study. This is true of some Parkland students, but others need the support of the community college to help them adapt to higher education and prepare for the next steps, either at a 4-year institution or in the workplace. UIUC is research-focused while Parkland has a greater focus on workforce preparation at varying levels.

Because of our existing foundations and because of our differences as discussed above, we chose to focus our project not just on Parkland students who would be transferring to UIUC, but on all early childhood students at both intuitions. This includes UIUC students completing their entire program at UIUC as well as Parkland students who do not transfer to a 4-year institution, but instead go directly into the field with a Child Development AAS or certificate. More than 50% of Parkland College students are currently working with children in the community and have the potential to greatly impact early childhood quality immediately. UIUC students have multiple clinical placements in the community and most take teaching positions in districts around the state. In an effort to reconnect and realign our programs with Reggio Emilia fundamentals and with the Project Approach, we believe that it is important for all of our teachers to receive similar instruction in emergent curriculum and investigative pedagogies. All will need those philosophies and skills in the classroom to support each other, their students, and their colleagues.

Description of Design

Our project consisted of several shared experiences. For example, both principal investigators (PIs), along with local teachers and other faculty, attended the UIUC Chancellor's Academy, featuring speakers on Reggio Emilia and mathematics. The PIs and other faculty were able to tour a Chicago Commons (a social service organization and former settlement house that operates a Reggio Emilia-inspired Head Start) program and meet with faculty and administrators there. Additionally, students from

both intuitions visited Reggio Emilia-inspired schools in Chicago and Champaign. Students and faculty were also able to attend math workshops offered by the Erikson Institute. Lastly, the PIs built libraries of mathematics' materials and books that are available to students at both institutions and to teachers in the community.

Chancellor's Academy

The Chancellor's Academy is a week-long professional development program for local teachers offered by the Center for Small Urban Communities at the University of Illinois. For several years, there has been a section within the Chancellor's Academy for early childhood education that is attended by Head Start teachers. The two PIs asked that the morning sessions for the full week of the Chancellor's Academy be focused on Reggio Emilia-inspired learning and mathematics in early childhood education. The purpose of this was to (1) enhance faculty knowledge through our own participation and (2) begin to lay groundwork for Reggio Emilia-inspired teaching in the Champaign-Urbana community with the goal of both improving the programs' use of Project Approach and to align potential clinical placement classrooms with the teacher education programs at UIUC and Parkland.

We invited expert speakers to deliver full morning trainings to our group of Head Start teachers. Experts included the studio coordinator (*atelierista*) from the Chicago Commons Association, who provided an introduction to Reggio Emilia practices; two classroom teachers from the Butler University Laboratory School who described how they used Reggio Emilia-inspired practices in mathematics teaching; and a colleague from St. Ambrose University who extended the discussion of mathematics pedagogy in early childhood classrooms.

It was disappointing that, due to the summer scheduling of the Chancellor's Academy, we were unable to offer it to our teacher candidates. Instead, participants were local Head Start teachers and Parkland and UIUC faculty. We considered the week on the whole to be successful. The Academy started some important dialogs with our Head Start partners and also helped the two PIs to plan experiences for the fall 2015 semester.

Chicago Commons

Chicago Commons was an important partner in this project. This is a long-term relationship stemming from the UIUC PIs' dissertation work in a Chicago Commons early childhood center. Two faculty from each of the two partner institutions traveled to Chicago in late spring of 2015 to meet with a site director and education coordinator (*pedagogista*) to discuss our teacher preparation programs, how we hope to increase our respective foci on Reggio Emilia, and how Chicago Commons' programs might support and enhance our work. It was determined for the purposes of this project that this support would include participation of the studio coordinator in the Chancellor's Academy and three hour visits to Chicago Commons sites at two points during the fall 2015 semester.

It was the intention to take students from both programs to Chicago Commons for both site visits. However, the full day trip was logistically difficult for some of the Parkland students, many of whom work full-time. The Parkland PI and one Parkland student joined the Chicago Commons visit in October. In December, Parkland faculty and students instead visited the University Primary School in Champaign.

Courses and Materials

During the development of the project, our Chicago Commons partners (including a site director, program coordinator, and teachers) and our partner colleague at St. Ambrose University served as our primary sources of course development and materials. After we began work, we decided to ask the Erikson Institute for support as well. Our St. Ambrose partner met with us via telephone and in person to discuss her methods for teaching early childhood mathematics, experiences in Reggio Emilia, and program development at St. Ambrose University. She shared numerous items and resources, including textbooks, videos, and lists of materials.

Both PIs had previous contact with the Erikson Institute and were familiar with Erikson's current research and training in math methods. Erikson faculty was contacted to discuss the possibility of bringing students to Erikson for mathematics' lab work. Additionally, the Erikson faculty was

happy to speak with us and also suggested books and materials such as a textbook, *Big Ideas of Early Mathematics: What Teachers of Young Children Need to Know*, that they developed.

Program Implementation

The support of these three partners provided the foundation of our work in mathematics pedagogy. Undergraduate course materials were structured using the Erikson text and additional materials from our St. Ambrose partner. The lending library was similarly developed using suggestions from the Erikson faculty, books suggested in the Erikson text, and what we identified as appropriate materials in keeping with our own Reggio Emilia-inspired mission through discussions with Chicago Commons. Prior to the start of the fall (2015) semester, one course at UIUC (Principles and Practices in Early Childhood) was temporarily re-designed to include the math methods developed during the course of this project (see Figure 1). The mathematics pedagogy content added to Principles and Practices in Early Childhood will become a stand-alone course, which will be made available to students in the spring of 2019.

Ongoing program development and materials support Parkland students' opportunities for experience and practice. Additionally, Parkland

Figure 1: UIUC student documenting what her classmates are wearing using categories that emerged from the group. This activity was learner-developed and part of a student presentation of teaching data analysis in early childhood using *Big Ideas of Early Mathematics*.

and UIUC both have built resources libraries for candidates to sustain the outcomes of the project beyond the project period.

Libraries

Four resource libraries were created, two at each institution. Both UIUC and Parkland have a library for teacher preparation and a second library for community use. The UIUC community library is housed in the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse at the Children's Research Center. The Parkland community library is housed in the Child Development Classroom Lab. Both libraries are available to be used by campus laboratory schools as well as by students.

Library materials to support our work include manipulatives, building sets, children's books, and resource books. Both programs received a complete set of Froebel's gifts. The Froebel gifts were developed by Friedrich Froebel's original kindergarten between 1835 and 1850 (Beatty, 1995). The purpose of the gifts was to facilitate, starting from infancy, the perception of objects (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). While Froebel developed the gifts to allow children to understand the unity of the universe (Beatty, 1995), the part-whole structure of the toys allows teachers to use them to introduce early math concepts, even if teachers do not adhere to other elements of Froebel's spirituality-grounded philosophy of childhood. UIUC and Parkland foundation courses also use the gifts to demonstrate foundations of early childhood mathematics and other STEM topics.

Chicago Commons Visit and Observation

Students and faculty from UIUC and Parkland College traveled together by van to one of the Chicago Commons' Head Start sites in early October 2015. We arrived at the Paulo Friere Family Center, where we received a tour of the center. Students were then assigned classrooms in pairs so that they could observe interactions between teachers and children. Students spent a full hour in their appointed classrooms. While the primary goal was collecting data related to teaching and learning, all students had a significant amount of classroom experience prior to our visit and all fully integrated themselves into classroom activities. After the observation,

students met with the education coordinators, who gave them more information about the program and answered questions.

UIUC students and faculty visited the same center again in early December. After the observation, students met with classroom teachers and asked practical questions about teaching in a Reggio Emilia-inspired program and early career teaching.

University Primary School Visit and Observation

Parkland students, including practicum students and a transfer student from Russia, visited the University Primary School also in early December (see Figure 2). This was their first opportunity to visit a practicing program using Reggio Emilia-inspired practice. As stated above, the University Primary School also structures project work with the Project Approach. Students were able to observe classroom practices and meet with a prekindergarten classroom lead teacher, who had been a Parkland student and then transferred to UIUC.

In addition to the classroom visits of prekindergarten, a kindergarten/first grade classroom, a second/third grade classroom, and a fourth/fifth

Figure 2: Parkland students during their visit to University Primary School.

grade classroom, students visited the Illinois Early Intervention Clearing-house and learned about the Early Intervention Training Program. These two resources are both housed on the UIUC campus in the Children's Research Center—the same building that contains the University Primary School. The Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse is a resource for families and child care providers that supports knowledge of early intervention and child development. The Early Intervention Training Program provides training opportunities for early interventionists in Illinois.

After the UIUC visit, the students then met with their instructor to discuss what they had learned and ask questions about the Reggio Emilia philosophy and continuing professional education.

Erikson Institute Professional Development

Students from both UIUC and Parkland were invited to attend sessions at the Erikson Institute in October and December 2015. These sessions were scheduled on the same day as the Chicago Commons observation experiences. Because of previously mentioned logistical difficulties, a single Parkland student and the Parkland PI attended the October session and no one from Parkland was able to join the December session. The full UIUC senior cohort and two to three faculty (including the UIUC PI) attended both sessions.

The sessions delivered by Erikson drew from many of the same ideas as the course textbook. The October session was titled *Sets: Considering Attributes (& Building Number Sense)*. The December session was titled *Measurement: What Kind of "Big" Is It?* Because UIUC students were using the course textbook concurrently and both programs had used Erikson's research as a resource in constructing the libraries, the content was not unfamiliar and built on other work that the students were doing, both in class and in clinical placement.

Successes and Modifications Going Forward

The most important outcome of this project has been ongoing conversations between early childhood faculty at UIUC and Parkland College. We are continuing to discuss opportunities to link the two programs. Currently identified opportunities include a shared National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) student chapter, student sharing of classroom projects, and visits to the two (UIUC and Parkland) laboratory schools by students from both programs. Our intention is that this relationship will continue to be an integral part of the programs at the two partner institutions so that students can both see the clear pathway from Parkland to UIUC and also the shared values in 2- and 4-year early childhood programs. Students from the two institutions will have an influence on the Champaign-Urbana community. It is important to us that we present a shared vision and a united front.

The focus on early childhood math pedagogy and integration of Reggio Emilia fundamentals was also successful. UIUC and Parkland students had a much stronger understanding of skills and competencies children need for mathematics in prekindergarten. Students also gained a better understanding of what emergent, investigative practice looks like in practice and how to use emergent curricula and investigative pedagogy to support mathematics learning.

Going forward, UIUC faculty and students need to be more cognizant of the needs of Parkland students. UIUC students are primarily traditional residential college students who are not working (or who work only part-time) and who are able to devote most of their time to coursework. Many Parkland students are non-traditional. For example, most have full-time jobs and family commitments in addition to coursework. It is much more difficult for Parkland students to be able to take trips around the state or even around Champaign County. However, we cannot use this as an excuse to provide opportunities for our 4-year students that we do not provide to our 2-year students. In the future, we must consider how we are presenting opportunities and how we can make them available for all students.

We must also continue to consider the very different roles that UIUC and Parkland College play in Champaign-Urbana and how each can use their strengths to support the other. As a research university, UIUC has significant resources for faculty and students to explore innovative pedagogies. As a community college, Parkland College has a strong grounding in the community and a pragmatic view of community needs. Each can better address community and student necessities together than either can separately.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Because our project drew strongly from the history of both of our programs and existing relationships within the community, much of the work is not specifically generalizable to other contexts. However, our goal is to think beyond program articulation and to link our two programs philosophically. As other programs clarify their articulation agreements, we encourage them to also look for ways to create partnerships that go beyond a clear 2-year to 4-year pathway. In this case of our programs, our own philosophies and needs led us to aligning math curricula and pedagogy and to reexamining our programs through the lenses of Reggio Emilia and Project Approach. However, just as we teach our pre-service teachers to use the children's needs and interests to build larger skills, math curricula and investigative pedagogies were vehicles for us to strengthen relationships between our two programs. Other program partnerships may find that their program requirements or interests differ from ours. But, the relationship-building and the recognition of the strengths of both programs can occur just the same.

References

Beatty, B. (1995). *Preschool education in America: The culture of young children from the colonial era to the present*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Chen, J., McCray, J., Adams, M., & Leow, C. (2013). A survey study of early childhood teachers' beliefs and confidence about teaching early math. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 42*(6), 367-377.

Dewey, J. (2001). *The school and society & the child and the curriculum*. Mineola, NY: Dover. (Original publication in 1902 and 1915).

ECAP Collaborative. (n.d.). *The ERIC Clearinghouse on elementary and early childhood education*. Retrieved from http://ecap.crc.illinois.edu/eecearchive/books/projcat3/section5/eece.html

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. (1996). Introduction. In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. Forman (Eds.), *The hundred languages of children. The Reggio Emilia Approach to early childhood education* (pp. 3-13). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Erikson Institute. (2014). *Big ideas of early mathematics: What teachers of young children need to know*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Erikson Institute. (2016). *About Erikson*. Retrieved from http://www.erikson.edu/about/

Flavell, J. H. (1963). T*he developmental psychology of Jean Piaget*. Princeton, NJ: D. Van Norstrand Company, Inc.

Gandini, L. (1993). Fundamentals of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education. *Young Children, 49*(1), 4-8.

Haigh, K. (1997). How the Reggio Emilia Approach influenced an inner-city program: Exploring Reggio in Head Start and subsidized child care. In J. Hendrick (Ed.), *First steps to teaching the Reggio way* (pp. 153-166). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc,

Helm, J. H., & Katz, L. (2011). *Young investigators: The project approach in the early years* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Katz, L. (1996). What can we learn from Reggio Emilia? In C. Edwards, L. Gandini, & G. Forman (Eds.), *The hundred languages of children. The Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education* (pp.19-37). Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Katz, L., & Chard, S. C. (2000). *Engaging children's minds: The project approach*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Lascarides, V. C., & Hinitz, B. F. (2011). *History of early childhood education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Scheinfeld, D. R., Haigh, K. M., & Scheinfeld, S. J. P. (2008). *We are all explorers: Learning and teaching with Reggio principles in urban settings*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Smith, S. C. (2015). *Against race- and class-based pedagogy in early childhood education*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Spodek, B. (2009). "Unintended consequences": A life in early childhood education. *Early Childhood Research and Practice, 11*(1). Retrieved from http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v11n1/interview-spodek.html

Tarr, P. (2001). Aesthetic codes in early childhood classrooms: What art educators can learn from Reggio Emilia. *Art Education, 54(*3), 33-39.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1979). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Partnership Description

Developing the 12-institution early childhood education transfer consortium reported in this chapter is how its members rose to meet the teacher preparation innovation challenge issued by the Illinois Board of Higher Education in 2014. Although the programs represented in the consortium range widely in size (35-170 students) and types (credential and certificate; associate, bachelor, master's, and doctoral degrees), they share a deep commitment to insuring all young children, their families, and their communities can benefit from the work of well-educated professionals. Located within a 30-mile radius of each other in the Chicagoland area, these eight 2-year colleges and four universities also have shared students, employers, and even faculty for over three decades.

The authors hereby acknowledge the contributions and dedication of our other partners who made the consortium possible: Jennifer Alexander, Anne Brennan, and Carrie Nepstad of the City Colleges of Chicago; Aileen Donnersberger of Moraine Valley Community College; Christopher Fogarty of Prairie State College; Tara Mathien of Harper College; and Larry Sondler of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

Chicago State University: http://www.csu.edu/IER/factbooks.htm

Richard J. Daley College & Harold Washington College/City Colleges of Chicago: http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Pages/Facts-Statistics.aspx

DePaul University: http://www.depaul.edu/Pages/default.aspx

Harper College: http://goforward.harpercollege.edu/about/index.php

Moraine Valley Community College: https://www.morainevalley.edu/about/facts/

Morton College: http://morton.edu/About-Morton/Morton-College-at-a-Glance/

Prairie State College: http://prairiestate.edu/about-us/student-profile.aspx

Roosevelt University: https://www.roosevelt.edu/IR/QuickFacts.aspx

Saint Xavier University: http://sxu.edu/about/facts.asp

South Suburban College: http://www.ssc.edu/news-events-information/about-ssc/

CHAPTER 10

When Innovation Means Breaking the Enrollment Management Mold: Building a Postsecondary Institution Transfer Network Consortium

Marie Ann Donovan, Patricia Steinhaus, Antonia Potenza, Anne George, Cheryl Bulat, and Donna Walker

Key Words: articulation, collaboration, consortium, degree transfer, diversity, Gateways Credentials, higher education, program redesign

Overview of a Postsecondary Institution Transfer Network Consortium

This chapter summarizes the initial vision, formation, and work of postsecondary faculty in creating the 12-member Chicago-area Consortium for Redesigning Early Childhood Education (CACRECE), whose goal is to establish a common articulation pathway that ultimately insures early childhood education (ECE) students can more readily earn bachelor degrees across all 12 members' institutions. The chapter describes (a) the processes involved in identifying institutional and programmatic issues of common concern across institution types (i.e., public and nonprofit private); (b) the evolution of the relationships among partner types (2- and 4-year early childhood professional preparation programs), particularly as they worked within their individual triad networks (one 4-year with two 2-year institutions) and across the consortium to articulate programs and practices; plus (c) the roles and responsibilities of various consortium members in coordinating efforts. Successes and "lessons learned" during the one year of consortium-wide funding (2014-2015) are highlighted and

recommendations offered for others seeking to formalize their geographic institutional relationships in order to strengthen their local ECE professional preparation networks.

Envisioning a Postsecondary Early Childhood Education Consortium

Chicago architect Daniel Burnham's famous dictum that one should make "no little plans" if one is to "stir men's blood" (Moore, 1921, p. 147) relates to the nature of the collaborative work we describe in this chapter. In November 2013, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) funding opportunity for ECE teacher educators whose title captured Burnham's spirit: The Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grant. The aim of the funding was to inspire as well as incentivize ECE teacher educators to partner among themselves across the state in developing new or improved ways to increase articulation or other course transfer options from the 2- to 4-year levels. When the Innovation grants (as they came to be referenced) were announced, ECE faculty around the state quickly gathered with their historical institutional colleagues to form the grant's required triad partnerships of one 4-year institution with two 2-year institutions. During November and December, triads began designing their proposals based upon extant "wish lists" of curricular and partnership ideals they long dreamed of finding support to realize (e.g., seamless articulation and/or reverse transfer agreements and shared advisory boards).

When the faculty who eventually developed our consortium casually shared their triad partners' nascent proposal ideas with other Chicago-area triads, a similar main goal and purpose emerged across all participating institutions: finding ways to better articulate coursework to increase bachelor degree achievement and, in turn, improve early care and education in all its guises. As veteran ECE faculty, we all were acutely aware of students who experienced significant difficulty in transferring coursework from one institution to another, oftentimes losing or duplicating credit in the process. We all knew active practitioners who shied away from pursuing additional

degrees because their original coursework was not viewed as being articulable to early childhood education (ECE) programs at the 4-year or graduate level, due to changes over time in teacher licensing standards or bachelor degree requirements. All partners had anecdotes of center directors and building principals contacting us in hope that we could somehow figure out a way for an employee to complete an ECE bachelor degree that built upon previous coursework as well as years of documented, relevant work experiences that were not being accounted for in typical transcript analyses.

As individual partner triads talked among themselves and with other triads, we returned to the same deeper "what" and "why" questions the RFP's charge provoked: What would be truly innovative in the postsecondary early childhood teacher preparation arena? What have we not considered or attempted to do before now that would address the chronic issues early childhood professionals face in pursuing lifelong education (e.g., loss of "old" credit hours or no credit for demonstrable work experience)? *Why hasn't anyone managed to address these issues before now?* The more we considered our common goal—making it easier for ECE students to earn their bachelor degrees—we recognized that what *would* be *innovative* was to first create a partnership of our 12 institutions (eight 2-year, four 4-year, public and private) that one day would result in transfer pathways between and across these institutions, not only concerning associate and bachelor degrees but also the same institution types. We named our partnership to reflect our activity as well as our goal: the Chicago-Area Consortium for the Redesign of Early Childhood Education (CACRECE). Table 1 lists the members of the Consortium, broken out by the four partner triads of one 4-year with two 2-year institutions.

Table 1
Consortium Triad Members

2-Year Institutions	4-Year Institutions
Morton College South Suburban College	Chicago State University
City Colleges of Chicago (District Administrator for Transfer Initiatives) Prairie State College	DePaul University
Harold Washington College, City Colleges of Chicago Harper College	Roosevelt University
Richard J. Daley College, City Colleges of Chicago Moraine Valley College	St. Xavier University

Keeping in mind the relatively short length (one year, January 2014–February 2015) of the grant funding's support for this Burnham-style goal, we constructed our work whereby we would do the following, for the reasons noted:

(a) teach each other the anticipated or actual changes made to our individual programs to meet the Gateways professional credential requirements (Illinois Gateways to Opportunity, 2016) and impending new ECE teacher licensure standards from the Illinois State Board of Education (Illinois State Board of Education, 2016), so that all would know how each other's program interpreted the professional standards (i.e., those of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC) underlying these credential and licensing standards, as well as how ECE programs differed in organizing their curricular content to teach such requirements and standards;[1]

---

[1] The Gateways Credential is an Illinois-specific, leveled system of certifying ECE-related expertise and knowledge, separate from the ISBE teacher licensure system.

(b) examine student assignments and assessments across all our programs, to understand the breadth of contexts and approaches we all used to foster and evaluate students' achievement of professional standards; and

(c) work first within our partner triads (one 4-year with two 2-year institutions) to develop or finalize articulation agreements, reporting periodically to the Consortium about discoveries made through curriculum deliberation both across and within institutions, so that all could construct robust pathways insuring student success.

This chapter highlights the work we accomplished during one year of funding, as well as the many lessons we learned about who, what, and why ECE professionals, and those who aspire to become such, face barriers in their professional education. This chapter also describes the benefits derived from stepping outside the silos formed in a competitive higher education marketplace driven by campus enrollment management dictates.

Context and Impetus for Developing a Postsecondary ECE Consortium

In reflecting upon what brought CACRECE members together, we agreed our coalescing was inevitable in certain respects. For example, many CACRECE members participated in the ECE teacher pipeline study (Klostermann, 2010) coordinated by the Illinois Education Research Center, which also guided the formulation and dissemination of that ECE report. The program-to-employment scan conducted in preparing the pipeline report painted a bleak picture of how and why individuals with initial interest in pursuing an early childhood career often never manage to complete the requisite degree for ultimate employment in the field. Klostermann's (2010) research identified institutions' need to bolster efforts in (a) providing more faculty mentors to guide students into and through the ECE professional landscape; (b) increasing course-scheduling flexibility, to accommodate students who are employed full or part time; and (c) developing college readiness preparation or academic support

programs for students who struggle in their general education courses. In the four years since that report was disseminated (i.e., at the time of the Innovation grant's announcement), CACRECE institutions varied in how successful they were in addressing these needs. We CACRECE participants all thought the Innovation grant opportunity would provide critical support for better understanding, if not actually realizing, one or more of these three main program improvement goals at each of our institutions. Therefore, each of the four CACRECE triads' initial proposals included activities related to achieving one or more of these goals. What differed among us were the particular questions and planned activities we designed to reach these goals. For example, some of us had academic support programs in place. What we next focused on was reviewing our current programs to see whether and how they were enabling students to master the specific skills and knowledge needed to meet the new Gateways credentialing or ISBE licensing standards.

As faculty at Chicago-area institutions of higher education, we also were aware of, or participated in the Illinois P-20 Council's (2013) research on the lack of diversity in the PK-12 teacher pool, as well as the uneven quality of newly minted teachers. While our individual ECE programs varied in student demographic composition at the undergraduate and graduate levels, we all desired to increase candidate diversity in order to better reflect the manifold range of the children and families our graduates would serve. We also all had campus initiatives (e.g., peer tutoring, intrusive advising) that focused on improving the academic achievement of our ECE students, some of whom struggled to pass the basic skills test (the Illinois Test of Academic Proficiency, TAP) or the national Academic College Testing examination (ACT) required for full admission to professional preparation programs leading to an ISBE-issued teacher license in our state.

Related research that informed our individual program or department work when we initiated our consortium centered on the variables affecting who chooses to pursue a career in teaching as well as *when*. White, DeAngelis, and Lichtenberger (2013) studied Illinois' statewide longitudinal database of public high-school and college students to see who

became pre-kindergarten (PK)-12 teachers. They examined these students' education trajectories from high school to their initial teaching positions. Among their findings was how relatively few high-school students among cohort peers chose teaching of any kind as a professional goal (11.5%). Also of note is how less than one third who indicated an interest in teaching ever completed a bachelor degree. Of additional concern to CACRECE members was how, in each postsecondary stage up to employment, the teacher pool became less racially and ethnically diverse. These findings were obvious in the student demographics on most of our campuses, especially at the 4-year level.

White et al. (2013) also drew compelling connections between the developmental steps in obtaining Illinois State Board of Education licensure from high school through postsecondary education. They noted that students who aspired to become teachers while in high school often ultimately reached their goal. Among the many implications of White et al.'s (2013) findings is the need for 2- and 4-year teacher preparation programs to create partnership and recruitment relationships with area high schools, in order to educate students about the profession's academic qualifications and job opportunities. Only some 2-year CACRECE members enjoyed partnerships with their area high schools when we began our work. This is not surprising. Developing school- and district-based partnerships is a complex endeavor. For 4-year institutions, high-school partnerships tend to focus more on postsecondary student recruitment and fieldwork or student placement activity (for future secondary teachers), rather than constructing a career education pathway. All 4-year and some 2-year CACRECE members were interested in learning more about these types of partnerships as part of their consortium work, based on White et al.'s (2013) determination of how influential the high-school experience can be in shaping students' career aspirations and realizations.

Designing the Consortium Model

The RFP for the Innovation grant initiative proved to be a valuable catalyst and blueprint for shaping our collaboration model. The grant's length (one year) and stipulation that one 4-year institution and two 2-year institutions partner on each proposal, forced us to quickly rethink our priorities and our short- as well as long-range development phases. We realized we first had to decide within triads what was most important to accomplish during the year of funding. Rethinking our priorities alone was eye-opening: while institutions were used to partnering on curriculum and programs through brokering articulation agreements, these arrangements usually were done on a one-to-one basis between two schools. That is, a 4-year institution would contract with a 2-year institution or vice-versa. Forming a partner triad opened up that traditional relationship whereby two 2-year institutions were in conversation with each other as well as with their partner 4-year university. Being in a focused triad enabled members to more accurately identify the most salient and related issues requiring prompt resolution through the year's funding support. In addition, connecting like this made it easier to secure articulation resources (e.g., curriculum maps that could be adapted or sample course and fieldwork assessment tools) from each other that the members in the triad otherwise would not know existed.

Given the common questions and learning needs we shared, we devoted time during the proposal-writing phase to pinpoint the essential collaboration outcomes and exploration processes we planned to achieve jointly. Thus, each of our funding proposals contained two aspects: the goals of our individual triad plus the agreed-upon consortium goals (see discussions below for more on these various goals). Each triad's proposal laid out its specific responsibility in achieving these consortium goals, along with explaining how their triad would work within itself to achieve goals that mutually benefited three sets of students and programs.

In view of the grant's length, we realized how essential it was to configure a dynamic structure among our four triads that insured timely, ongoing information and communication flow for the 12-member consortium. We

therefore set a schedule of bimonthly face-to-face meetings for all members (some members occasionally participated electronically). These meetings followed an agenda tied to specific outcomes: (a) triad reports on current activity and learning outcomes, so that all members would understand each other's approaches, barriers, and any missteps as well as be able to offer targeted suggestions or other support; (b) presentations by guest speakers or members who were experts in addressing members' issues or learning needs (e.g., ESL/bilingual ECE licensure and ISBE teacher licensing examination preparation); and (c) planning next steps for the consortium as a whole, based on themes that emerged from the day's discussions. In addition to these bimonthly meetings, individual triads met with other triads (in triad pairs or triplets) to share resources, develop or review curricula, and create program articulation agreements. The 4-year members also met monthly (at times, electronically) to focus on their program redesigns for the new ISBE licensure requirements, as well as to agree upon how they would prepare the quarterly grant activity reports stipulated by the funder (i.e., IBHE) as being the 4-year institutions' responsibility.

Significance of the Collaboration

What makes our consortium unique in Illinois is how it brings together geographically situated, professionally similar faculties who otherwise have few if any ways to routinely interact and discuss curriculum, as well as find solutions to problems ECE professionals face in earning degrees. The 2-year faculty of our consortium are all very active members of ACCESS Illinois, which is an affiliate member of ACCESS ECE, a national organization of ECE professionals who teach at the associate degree level. Our consortium's 4-year faculty are active in the Illinois Association for Early Childhood Teacher Education (ILAECTE). These two organizations rarely conduct any joint programming at either the regional or state levels, even though their missions are similar: to develop a high-quality ECE workforce and to advocate for lifelong professional learning opportunities (ACCESS ECE, 2014; Illinois Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators, 2011).

While ACCESS Illinois and ILAECTE members are able to collaborate at annual statewide ECE meetings, and there are local-area ECE conferences hosted by affiliate chapters of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), these events do not focus primarily or exclusively on the curricular design and success of professional preparation programs in meeting regional ECE workforce needs. However, we 12 CACRECE institutions operate programs within a 30-mile radius of one another. We share many of the same potential students as well as employers (Lichtenberger, White, & DeAngelis, 2015). We also all face similar challenges in supporting our students to become flexible, knowledgeable ECE professionals (e.g., intervention programs for majors whose high-school education did not sufficiently foster requisite reading, writing, or mathematical skills and prior learning and work experience credit). Given these common needs and challenges we asked ourselves, *how could we* not *form a consortium to work on persistent issues in developing relevant ECE preparation programs?* How could we use the Innovation grant opportunity to connect our work somehow?

In answering our rhetorical questions, we faced a professionally awkward, tacit issue head-on: *Why collaborate with a marketplace competitor to solve a problem, especially in an era of shrinking enrollments?* We talked this through openly and honestly, in confidence, before we finalized our funding proposals. We considered the benefits and risks of not connecting our curriculum work. Soon enough, we determined that by collaborating, we would make each of our programs better. In unity there would be strength. Thus, the novelty of our consortium is that we put aside typical enrollment management and marketing considerations, or notions that anyone has "trade secrets" that cannot be disclosed. Instead, we reified our commitment to the ECE field as a whole (i.e., child care and education) and vowed to work continuously on connecting ourselves, our research, and our program designs over time. We all remain committed today to our initial goal of discovering new ways of conducting our triad's work as well as supporting that of all the others in the consortium.

Implementing the Consortium Model

As described briefly above, our consortium model consists of four institutional triads working within and across each other. Each triad specified in its original Innovation grant proposal a set of related goals and activities that their three-way partnership would realize by the end of the grant's support year (i.e., January 2014–February 2015). Each triad also included in their proposal the agreed-upon set of consortium-wide goals and activities: (a) at the 4-year institutions, redesign existing programs to meet the impending new ISBE teacher licensure requirements; at the 2-year institutions, begin redesigning Associate of Arts (AA) degree programs based on the triad 4-year partner's program redesign; (b) plan the creation of a common articulation pathway across CACRECE members; and (c) identify ECE partners in the triad's community who could provide optimal field experiences that would insure all triad institutions' students would learn what they need for eventual ISBE teacher licensure at the bachelor level. Goal (c) was included because during initial consortium formation conversations before submitting funding proposals, members realized that not all triads' geographically situated fieldwork site personnel, and/or the program curricula, were uniformly affording students the opportunity to complete licensure-level activities that would meet ISBE standards.

Implementing the consortium model required a two-pronged approach: working within triads, as mentioned above, and then sharing that work with all the other triads in the consortium. Individual triads collaborated within themselves, on an intensive schedule, to curriculum map each triad partner's program. The mapping process examined each institution's course content, readings, assignments, learning outcomes, and assessments related to documenting candidates' achievement of professional standards, using the Gateways Credential benchmarks plus drafts of the anticipated new ISBE teacher licensing standards (Illinois State Board of Education, 2016). Student test scores on the Illinois Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP), a standardized basic skills examination; the ISBE ECE Content; and ECE Assessment of Professional Teaching (APT) tests were analyzed within each triad to determine performance factors linked to particular

course content, assignments, or fieldwork experiences. Upon completion of these steps, each triad compared its 2-year members' programs and then worked to align each associate degree's curricula with that of their 4-year partner's program.

Bimonthly consortium meetings were held to provide the necessary, confidential sharing space in which the four member triads could hear how their experiences and realizations mirrored each other. At these meetings, the triads were responsible for reporting on their progress in achieving consortium goals and in redesigning the 4-year programs to meet the forthcoming new teacher licensure standards from ISBE, with emphasis on the 2-year curricula and assessment changes being made to insure articulation. Guest speakers and member experts in articulation, workforce needs, and new teacher licensing exams were featured in these agendas, to support the ongoing curriculum deliberation and development of new courses across all triads. Throughout this meeting work, triads committed to considering particular aspects of other consortium members' approaches in redeveloping their own course content, program assessments, and articulation agreements. They also agreed to share what they were learning from their consortium involvement with their ECE and other education program colleagues on their campuses, as well as to further the reach of the consortium's growing repertoire of strategies and tools for overall program redesign in the face of 21st century professional learning needs.

Consortium Membership Benefits

During the funding year, members worked tirelessly within their triads to learn the intricacies of each other's curricula, and to see how 2- and 4-year curricula aligned. Triads also began comparing their 2- and 4-year programs' curricula with that of their counterparts in the other triads. Members shared resources of all kinds to aid program redesign and piloting of new curriculum content—course syllabi, readings, assignments, assessment rubrics, electronic portfolios, and even faculty. Consortium members completed the year with a clearer sense of their immediate partner(s) programs, and what they as well as their students needed to do in order to

successfully transfer and earn their bachelor degrees (for example, earlier campus advising by faculty and staff to guide students in taking specific types of general education courses in order to prepare them for ISBE teacher licensure). Members appreciated how one of the key benefits of collaborating as a consortium was that it naturally led to being more aware of each other's program designs, course content, and the myriad ways possible to prepare students for bachelor-level work as well as ISBE teacher licensure. It is important to note, however, that while consortium membership enabled faculty to learn more about other triads' programs, they were not able to learn those programs as deeply or completely as they did those of their own triad.

One of the triads focused primarily on conducting research into the ECE student experience on 2-year campuses, from initial inquiry through program enrollment. Their work was inspired and informed by the ECE pipeline study (Klostermann, 2010) plus consortium members' concerns raised during the bimonthly meetings about declining conversion rates and enrollments in ECE programs. This triad developed and conducted a pilot study of campus recruiters, transfer specialists, and professional (i.e., non-faculty) advisors for potential and current ECE majors, Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees. Among their findings was how on many of the campuses studied ($n = 6$; not all were consortium members), these degrees did not interact on a regular or frequent basis. Said triad also found that some recruiters as well as professional advisors were not aware of the Gateways credentialing system and/or the forthcoming changes to teacher licensing. While the majority of professional advisors knew about Gateways, many were not aware of how those credentialing levels relate to teacher-licensing programs' curricula and outcomes. These advisors assumed there were two totally different tracks, with the AA degree separate from the AAS degree, rather than how both the Gateways credentialing and teacher licensing standards stem from the same NAEYC professional standards, with levels of knowledge and expertise built into the benchmarks. Recruiters, in general, did not possess much specialized or nuanced knowledge about how to guide prospective students in using

the Gateways Credential levels to help determine the type of program for the students' 2-year degrees. Although these findings were based on 2-year institution focus groups and interviews, all consortium members were able to use this information to plan and conduct their own campus research and improve communication flow among their ECE program directors, enrollment management staff, and advising specialists.

Some triads used student program completion and teacher licensing subtest data to guide their curriculum redesigns. Through our consortium work, the 2-year faculty also learned more about the content and format demands of a new (as of September 2015) teacher licensing examination used by ISBE, the edTPA (i.e., Education Teacher Performance Assessment). Triad teams traced where in the 2- and 4-year curricula of their triad they could see the performance proficiencies of the edTPA being taught and reinforced in course content and assignments from freshman year onward. All consortium members found this work especially helpful; it drew attention to the "hidden curriculum" in courses and fieldwork that need to be in place from the start of any ECE teacher licensure program. Our consortium was also able to share relevant assignments and course activities for all ECE programs to consider; this enriched our individual work with colleagues in our programs, as well as saved time.

By the end of our funding timeline, all consortium members either had draft articulation agreements in place or were farther along in developing them than previous to the grant. Some triads were well into the process of creating curriculum models for eventual pathways among themselves, whereby students who did not pursue the AA degree would still be able to transfer to the 4-year institution and earn a bachelor degree in a related ECE field, all with little or no loss of credit. Campus administrators at many of the members' institutions appeared intrigued by this idea; little pushback was evident. Instead, triad faculty were encouraged to continue trying to find ways to support prospective students in realizing their degrees.

Lessons Learned in Creating the Consortium

Agreeing to work together as a whole body to meet the challenge of the Innovation grant was a leap of faith for all. While participants knew each other through state work and professional conferences, and were somewhat familiar with each other's programs, we soon realized our need to check any long-held assumptions about each other's student demographics and/or specific program content. We had to trust that our collective approach would benefit each of us eventually. Additionally, we needed to put aside any qualms about opening our curricula and programming practices to each other's scrutiny.

Each triad partner learned about other partners' programming and/or populations within our first quarter together, as well as deepened our understanding of our institutions' roles in guiding students to become savvier about planning their developmental trajectories. We also confronted the fact that we must build into our individual, everyday program work a set of communication channels within our institutions as well as beyond them if we are to continue providing the type of relevant education necessary for the ECE workforce. Thus, all schools are connected—by geography, professional standards, and employer demands. Remaining in silos does not benefit the ECE field or help any of the partnership schools towards growth and expansion.

Before the RFP was issued, it was difficult to set aside time and talent to develop new articulation agreements. None of our institutions possessed the ability to offer faculty compensated-time to focus on curriculum redesign or the creation of new articulation agreements, even though these are monumental tasks that normally only faculty complete. While we wished to pool a portion of our grant's resources whereby we collectively could do further work on such things, unfortunately, only two of our four triads received Year Two funding to continue this work. Nevertheless, we all remain in contact with the other consortium members and are finding ways (albeit less formal) to bring the consortium back to its originally scheduled bimonthly sharing format.

Forming and becoming a collective is a worthy endeavor that engenders professional vitality. Not any one of us can keep up on all the changes in professional standards and credentials, or workplace practices and needs, or implications of advances in child development theory (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015) that affect all ECE professionals. Through formally collaborating with geographic program partners, we became more proactive and secure in our work. We also are able now to rely upon our network of expert colleagues to resolve an issue or to better understand a new regulation. We do not feel so separate or alone any more.

Recommendations for Future 2- and 4-Year Partnerships

At the heart of any consortium is the desire to achieve a common goal. The specifics of the goal emerge through sitting down and talking through what each other's learning needs and professional challenges are at the moment, as well as considering which is relevant to each partner. Replicating our consortium model requires both geographic and dispositional proximity. The ECE field is based on relationships—to ideas, to beliefs, to each other. Our experiences during the funding year helped us see how invaluable these relationships are in overcoming problems and forging new directions.

Creating a consortium like ours is possible in Illinois because our regional system of feeder 2-year to 4-year institutions is *de facto* consortiums, ready for development. What we did in creating our partnership was to gather together ECE professionals in nearby institutions and focus precisely on remedying the most salient, persistent, chronic problems our students face in realizing their professional preparation—lack of adequate advising; loss of transfer credit; need for new content knowledge and skills (e.g., STEM, ESL); plus the inability to complete credentials and degrees. Our consortium does not include all Chicagoland institutions. As a case in point, anyone who aims to replicate our work should "start small" and "think locally;" look for diversity of student bodies yet shared similar institutional

interests; and be willing, through face-to-face, analog, and online communication, to maintain consistency and clarity across workgroups.

Closing Thoughts

The remainder of Daniel Burnham's famous quote about plan-making is apropos here in describing the feelings of our consortium members at this developmental stage:

> Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and our grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. (Moore, 1921, p. 147)

By the end of our year together, our consortium is able to say with certainty that what makes us members of the ECE professional community is a commitment to collaborating for the good of all participants. We now know more about what to do, and how to extend our work whereby it benefits all who plan to pursue degrees in ECE. Why not create a formal network to achieve this big plan?

References

ACCESS ECE. (2014). *Our mission*. Retrieved from https://accessece.org/

Illinois Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (ILAECTE). (2011). *About the organization*. Retrieved from http://wiu.edu/ilaecte/about.html

Illinois Gateways to Opportunity. (2016). *Illinois professional development system*. Retrieved from http://www.ilgateways.com/en/

Illinois P-20 Council. (2013). *Education for our future: Third annual report of the Illinois P-20 Council to the governor and legislature*. Retrieved from http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/P20/Documents/Full%20P-20/P-20%20 Report%202013.pdf

Illinois State Board of Education. (2016). *Teacher licensure standards*. Retrieved from http://isbe.net/licensure/html/standards.htm

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Klostermann, B. K. (2010). *Examining the Chicago early childhood teacher pipeline* (IERC 2010-1). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council.

Lichtenberger, E. J., White, B. R., & DeAngelis, K. J. (2015). *The geography of the new teacher pipeline* (IERC 2015-1). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council.

Moore, C. (1921). *Daniel H. Burnham: Architect, planner of cities*. Volume 2, Chapter XXV, "Closing in, 1911-1912," p. 147. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

White, B. R., DeAngelis, K. J., & Lichtenberger, E. J. (2013). *The student has become the teacher: Tracking the racial diversity and academic composition of the teacher supply pipeline* (IERC 2013-3). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council.

Workforce Development

Partnership Description

Illinois State University (ISU) is located in the twin-city community of Bloomington-Normal near the geographic center of Illinois. With a total enrollment of just over 20,000 students, 54.9% of the on-campus undergraduate students at ISU are female and 22.3% are minorities. The three largest transfer "feeder" institutions for early childhood students at ISU are Heartland Community College, Illinois Valley Community College, and Illinois Central College.

Heartland Community College (HCC) is a 2-year fully accredited institution with campuses located in Normal, Pontiac, and Lincoln, Illinois. Serving approximately 18,000 credit and non-credit students, HCC has a minority student population of 23% and a first-generation ratio of 33%.

Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) encompasses a district that includes Putnam County, the majority of La Salle and Bureau Counties, and small parts of Lee, DeKalb, Grundy, Livingston and Marshall Counties. IVCC enrolls about 4,500 students, 58% of whom are female and 52% of whom work while attending IVCC.

Illinois Central College (ICC) is a public community college located in three areas near Bradley in East Peoria, north Peoria, and Pekin, Illinois. Its student population of 9,705 comes from 10 rural and urban counties in central Illinois and includes 70% white, 9.8% African American, 4.7% Latino/Latina, and 2.1% Asian students.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

Quick Facts About Illinois State University: http://illinoisstate.edu/quickfacts/

Heartland Community College: Fast Facts: http://www.heartland.edu/about/facts.html

Illinois Valley Community College: Profile of the College Fall 2015: https://www.ivcc.edu/ir.aspx?id=25486

About Illinois Central College: Essential Facts: https://icc.edu/about-icc/institutional-research/essential-facts

CHAPTER 11

Supporting Early Childhood Workforce Development and Pathways: Developing a Competency-Based Assessment System in Illinois

Sherry Sanden, Johnna C. Darragh Ernst, Kira Hamann, Amanda Quesenberry, Nancy I. Latham, Diane Christianson, and Andrianna Smyrniotis

Key Words: articulation, assessment, baccalaureate degree, competencies, credentials, pathways, program alignment, teacher licensure

Overview

Despite extensive research demonstrating how essential early childhood practitioners are in supporting positive long-term outcomes for children, the field of early childhood education has struggled to define both what educators must know and be able to do and how essential knowledge and skills can be acquired to create high-quality early childhood programming (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). Decades of research has concluded that the level of education of the early childhood practitioner is associated with quality programming (Whitebook, 2003). A critical challenge for the field today is creating a clearly defined, cohesive, and aligned system of professional development that ensures pre-service and in-service practitioners have the knowledge, skills and supports they need to promote young children's healthy development and learning (Fuller, 2011).

For several years, within Illinois the creation and implementation of a cohesive professional development system has been a focus. In this

chapter, we describe the work of four institutions in central Illinois: Illinois State University (ISU), Heartland Community College (HCC), Illinois Central College (ICC), and Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC), and how the partnership formed between these institutions supported the creation of a clearly defined, well-articulated, accessible pathway between 2- and 4-year institutions. In addition, we will present how the process of exploring opportunities and barriers to seamless, well-articulated pathways for students within these institutions led to the eventual creation of a competency-based assessment system that complements our state's early childhood credentials. We close this chapter with our vision of next steps in this trajectory, foreseeing an assessment framework for early childhood teacher education that enriches the preparation of teacher candidates and ultimately improves the development and learning of children in early childhood programs.

Illinois History and Overarching Issues

The initial goal amongst the four institutions was to create a clearly defined, well-articulated, accessible pathway between 2- and 4-year early childhood education (ECE) programs supportive of student access, progression, and goal attainment. Despite a strong foundation of collaborative success, Illinois has experienced challenges in developing seamless pathways for practitioners. These challenges are not unique to our state, and can be mirrored at the national level. One of the main challenges centers on variability in course offerings. For example, courses offered at 2-year colleges focus heavily on practical application while courses in bachelor degree programs more traditionally integrate theory and practice (Gomez, Kagan, & Fox, 2015). The 2- and 4-year programs, in Illinois and around the nation, also vary in their focus on field-based experiences (Whitebook & Austin, 2015). Courses offered at the 2-year level, for example, are more likely to provide shorter, less intensive experiences with young children, while courses at the 4-year level include immersive student teaching experiences.

Even when program offerings between 2- and 4-year institutions are congruent, many students who begin their studies at 2-year programs and elect to transfer to 4-year institutions face challenges in articulation. Although many states across the nation, including Illinois, offer bachelor degrees with ECE certification, many courses at community colleges in ECE do not transfer. The lack of articulation creates issues of credit loss for students, significantly increasing time to degree/credential and cost (Barnett, Carolan, Squires, Clarke Brown, & Horowitz, 2015; Schilder, 2016).

Disparities in course offerings, field-based experiences, and articulation create significant pathway challenges for practitioners: it becomes difficult for students to attain credentials and/or degrees when higher education systems do not align. Challenges inside higher education, however, are not the only source of confusion in pathway progression within the early childhood field. There is also great variability in terms of employment requirements, as different funding streams (child care, Head Start, and public schools, for example) require different standards, resulting in varied requirements for professional preparation (Whitebook & Austin, 2015). As well, certification policies "change over time and are influenced by state and federal legislation, research and recommended practices in the specific educational discipline, and direct service needs of local communities" (Stayton, Smith, Dietrich, & Bruder, 2011, p. 24). Many states do not use national standards in the development of state certification requirements, creating difficulty in reciprocity agreements across state lines, and a lack of accessibility to said state requirements (Stayton et al., 2011).

Within Illinois, extensive efforts have been dedicated to creating a responsive credentialing system based on the competencies and skills practitioners need to support the development and learning of young children. In 1997, as the nation's educational scene began to grapple with questions about how to define "quality" in early child care and education, a group of early childhood professionals, representing a broad range of organizations throughout Illinois, began discussing the possibility of creating a statewide voluntary Director Credential (T. Talan and A. Wharff, personal communication, March 23, 2016). Leading the charge was Paula Jorde-Bloom,

the founder of the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University. She and other early childhood leaders and policymakers in the state were concerned about a lack of specific guidelines in place to control for the quality of education and practical experiences of early care and education administrators. This group of leaders and policymakers wanted to develop a system with multiple entry points and pathways to completion that would account for professionals with differing education and experience levels. As a result, two pathways to the Gateways Illinois Director ECE Credential (IDC) were created, the direct route and the entitled route. Through the direct route, individuals submit for review information related to their education and are potentially awarded a Gateways IDC ECE Credential. Alternatively, the entitled route enables individuals to receive a Gateways IDC ECE Credential if the institution of higher education that they attended completed a quality-review process to ensure that their curricula meet the criteria to become an entitled institution. Subsequently, the dual pathways option has been utilized in the creation of each Gateways Credential.

As a result, in 2002 the aforementioned group of early childhood leaders and policymakers expanded and became known as the Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC). In collaboration with the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), PDAC developed a set of performance areas and corresponding benchmarks that all early child care and education administrators should possess. Over time these became known as the seven core content areas that must be included in every Illinois Gateways Credential, the document recognizing individuals' professional knowledge, skills, and experience in early childhood education. These areas include: (1) human growth and development, (2) health, safety, and well-being, (3) observation and assessment, (4) curriculum or program design, (5) interactions, relationships and environments, (6) family and community relationships, and (7) personal and professional development. Every Gateways ECE Credential could include other areas of specialization but must include the seven core content areas. In addition to considering core content areas, Gateways ECE Credentials include recognition of experience

and professional contributions to the field through documentation of field-based experiences through employment or through higher-education practicum/student-teaching experiences.

Currently in Illinois, early childhood teacher credentialing/licensing is overseen by multiple state governing organizations, such as the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE); the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS); and Gateways to Opportunity, administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Several of these agencies maintain regulatory minimum qualifications to work with specific age groups or in specific environments, while others encourage higher than minimum qualifications. Since 2002, the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity credentialing system, housed within the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), has expanded to include not only the Illinois Director Credential, but also the ECE, Infant and Toddler, School-Age and Youth Development, Family Child Care, Family Specialist, and Technical Assistance credentials. In addition to the creation of statewide credentials, a registry was created to track early care and education professionals throughout the state with the hopes of helping these professionals understand how their education and experience could translate into some of these credentials.

In 2012, when Illinois was awarded Race-to-the-Top funds, ExceleRate Illinois™ was born. Race-to-the-Top is a competitive grant program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, which encourages states to develop unique and innovative practices in education (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). ExceleRate built the Illinois Gateways Credentials into the state's only existing quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), which meant that percentages of early care and education providers were required to be credentialed in order for programs to move up in levels of quality. As a result, over the past four years the Illinois Gateways system has dramatically increased the number of Illinois Gateways Credentials awarded.

Credentials play a critical role in supporting practitioner development through cohesive pathways. Research exploring the relationship between teacher preparation, high-quality early childhood programming, and positive child outcomes has indicated that higher levels of teacher preparedness play a critical role in supporting young children's development (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). The relationship between levels of teacher quality and children's development and learning is so compelling that, in 2015, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC) recommended that teachers working with young children have a bachelor degree with specialized knowledge in early childhood education and targeted skills and competencies.

Ensuring teachers have the competencies needed to support young children's healthy development and learning requires a common understanding of what essential knowledge and skills are required, as well as how these knowledge and skills can be attained. The field of early childhood education needs to identify vital information, skills, and support for teachers to thrive, and comprehensive pathways need to be developed that facilitate attainment of these (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).

The current model of early childhood teacher preparation is ripe for a shift to a more systematic approach to professional training that provides sustained support to all programs. Gomez et al. (2015) recommended "a codified conceptual framework regarding what individuals working with young children need to know and be able to do" (p. 178), noting that varied delivery systems can be utilized to address diverse teaching styles and learning needs. In Illinois, a strong foundation has been established, but further work was needed to extend this foundation to support seamless workforce development pathways and clearly defined competencies.

Creating a Competency-Based Alignment
in Illinois

In December of 2014, 2-year and 4-year institutions of higher education in Illinois, along with representatives from the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), and the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) met to discuss ways to better align existing systems of higher education and the Gateways ECE Credentials to create a more seamless, stackable credentialing system for early childhood teacher preparation. One partnership, between Heartland Community College (HCC) and Illinois State University (ISU), had an existing relationship based on a shared desire to create career pathways for their students. These two institutions had already been exploring opportunities to maintain and formalize their partnership as well as to expand articulated courses. As these partners were exploring goals related to eliminating barriers to articulation, IBHE provided a grant opportunity supported by the federal Race to the Top initiative, referred to as the Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation Grant (EPPI) for ECE teacher education preparation program partnerships. The goal of this grant was to deepen and strengthen partnerships between 2- and 4-year institutions within the state of Illinois, providing funds to support programmatic revisions needed to enhance articulation, including both course and process revisions. At this point, Illinois Valley Community College (IVCC) and Illinois Central College (ICC) joined ISU and HCC, with a partnership team consisting of an early childhood faculty member from each community college and four early childhood faculty members from ISU. In the section below we outline our process creating a shared competency-based system within the existing state credentials' framework.

Key Issues

Two key issues served as the strategic foci of this partnership project. The first issue included examining cross-institutional articulation by exploring, with state-mandated re-design expectations looming, the plans of study of all four institutions. One of our goals was to move from a baseline of no credit hours directly articulating for students from community colleges to the direct transfer of 15 semester credit hours in early childhood education.

The second issue looked at creating a system of cross-institutional assessment throughout the partnerships. This issue centered on two main outcomes: (1) creating a system of program evaluation based on a shared measure that could serve all four programs' assessment requirements and provide partnership-level evaluation data to inform partnership logistics, direction, and growth; and (2) removing the barrier of transferring a course between institutions that "housed" a program assessment by creating a shared system of program evaluation and assessment. The focus of this section will examine the challenges, processes, and outcomes related to creating a cross-institutional assessment system (CIAS).

Existing Challenges

As we worked toward creating a shared system of program evaluation and assessment, specific questions and challenges—both at the state and institutional level—emerged. First, our team had to examine logistical expectations for the CIAS. For example, would a course-based assessment system be developed that evaluated students' understanding of specific articulated course content, by implementing a common assessment in each course, or would the developed assessment system be a standards-based CIAS? The first option had appeal because of the very specific courses that had been worked on for direct articulation between the three community college partners and ISU, as well as the ways these articulated courses could be used to house specific joint assessments. Although this provided a smooth pathway in regard to direct articulation to ISU, it did not allow for the fact that the community college partners interconnected many of these same foundational courses (i.e., child growth and development; language acquisition; child, family, and community; exceptional child) with their

other 4-year early childhood-program partners. This element already makes articulation for community colleges a complex navigation, but adding the element of connected course-based assessments would increase that complexity. With these challenges in mind, our group began to consider an assessment system based on a shared, unifying set of standards. With the inclusion of the Illinois Gateways Early Childhood Education Level 5 Credential at the 4-year licensure level, the ECE Gateways benchmarks seemed like a unifying standard set on which to base and develop a CIAS.

Opportunities: Competency Development

As the partnership group began considering the existing ECE Benchmarks as a unifying standard set, we quickly realized that the 347 explicit benchmarks that define Gateways Credential Levels 2-5 were too vast to be used as the base measurement tool for the assessment system. Capturing these 347 benchmarks in specific, measurable, observable competencies that reflected knowledge, skills and dispositions, as well as distinguishing levels of professional practice, would be more useful to inform us in the development of measurable proficiencies. We wanted competencies that concretely described what a practitioner/student should know and be able to do at specific levels of ECE employment in Illinois.

The crucial part of creating this aptitude-based CIAS was developing the competencies themselves. This involved a critical content analysis of the benchmarks, in a process of five stages, described below.

Stage one: Categorization/refinement. We began with an examination of the 347 benchmarks that currently make up ECE professional levels 2 through 5. These levels, in the Illinois system, include Assistant Teacher (Level 2), Teacher (Level 3), Lead Teacher (Level 4), and Master Teacher (Level 5). The entire team reviewed and categorized the 347 Gateways benchmarks by position as defined by ExceleRate, the state's quality rating system. We began by putting all 347 benchmarks on strips in the middle of a table, with no identifiers regarding the benchmarks' currently assigned credential level or content area. One at a time we picked benchmarks at random and indicated at what position or level of employment that skill, knowledge or disposition was essential for the practitioner to

know or demonstrate. The critical question, used as the plumb line for this discussion, was: What fundamental knowledge, skills, and dispositions must practitioners have to support the healthy development and learning of young children and families at each specific professional level of practice?

Consensus between group members was reached for each benchmark. We retained and marked for later analysis any points of reference that seemed redundant or unclear without the context of level or content area. Approximately 3% were identified as duplicates or unclear in the larger context and were assigned to a "parking lot" for the purposes of this analysis.

Stage two: Compilation. A subset of the larger team examined all of the benchmarks assigned to each professional level and coded them as to whether they pertained to (a) knowing: the essential knowledge required for success; (b) doing: applicable skills essential for success at; or (c) leading: advocating or facilitating promising practices in fellow professionals. We further sorted each professional level into the seven existing Gateways ECE Credential Content Areas. Following this analysis, the larger committee examined the compiled results for validation and confirmation of the sub-committee's work.

Stage three: Competency categorization. In this stage, a sub-committee of the partners met to cluster benchmarks in each content area and draft a competency statement for each group. They also considered and analyzed the benchmarks through the lens of the professional practice levels of knowing, doing, or leading, described above. The result of this process was 56 Illinois ECE Professional Competencies (ECE PCs) that reflected macro-level expectations for knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Many of the ECE PCs reflected exact benchmark language (see Appendix I). The larger team provided review, feedback, and validation of the ECE PC list with its assigned benchmarks. It was then organized by the seven content areas, and cross-tabbed by professional practice levels. This list included each original benchmark that was used to inform the creation of the ECE PCs.

Stage four: Master rubrics. Master rubrics are currently being created by a group of consultants who will serve as the measurement foundation for the CIAS, allowing the partnership to develop a shared measurement system that can inform each program as to how we are preparing practitioners to meet Illinois ECE Competencies. These master rubrics will also allow each partner institution to make unique curricular decisions. This includes what evidence will be required to consider performance, allowing different evidence to be used, but evaluated with the common master rubric measurements. For example, the same master rubric developed for the Child and Family ECE PC content area may be used on a family support/community resource portfolio produced by students at IVCC, in a parent interview project completed by students at HCC, or on a family-needs assessment project at ISU. The data produced can be shared using the common measurement instrument of the master rubric, allowing us to analyze students' ability to meet the needs of children and families as a partnership and by individual institutions.

Connections: Competency Work

Our initial goal in developing the competencies was to facilitate articulation between our institutions, creating seamless pathways for students and increasing accountability and assessment between programs. Competencies provided a logical organizational mechanism for supporting greater clarity and enhancing capacity for cross-institution collaboration. Anticipated consequences from our competency work included developing a system that clearly communicated essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support enhanced cross-institutional assessment practices. In addition, the data that emerged from our assessment fed back into programming to strengthen our capacity to support our students.

Unanticipated outcomes of this work included both the myriad of cross-system connections that were generated from the competency work and the breadth of exciting opportunity that this work has produced. One such outcome centered on unifying language around assessment and alignment. One of the main challenges that has existed in our state has been language. There are discrepancies in terms of how faculty, for example,

define and measure student learning and development as well as how they consider course infrastructure (courses vs. standards, for example). A huge opportunity that exists within the Illinois ECE competencies is the opportunity for unified language—if 2- and 4-year institutions communicate from the same foundation, as established through Illinois ECE Competencies, there is a far greater likelihood that understanding, at least in terms of message intention, will occur.

In addition to the gift of unifying language, these ECE competencies have been viewed within our state as an opportunity to unify our professional development and credit-bearing systems. For this to occur, Illinois ECE Competencies within higher education will be mapped into the professional development system, providing enhanced opportunities for clearly defined professional development plans, coaching, and support. Our state is exploring how clearly defined competencies with well-outlined assessments in terms of both training-to-credit and life-experience-to-credit pathways can support practitioners in the field.

As mentioned previously, one of the most salient rationales for using Illinois ECE Competencies related to opportunities in assessment is that Illinois ECE Competencies encapsulate knowledge, skills and dispositions within unifying language and create opportunities for shared assessment strategies across institutions. What we did not foresee was the application of Illinois ECE Competency assessment across the different avenues of our professional development system. Specifically, we had envisioned direct applicability to higher education, but Illinois ECE Competencies can also be used as an assessment tool for practitioners in the field. For example, directors in early childhood programs can use the Illinois ECE Competencies and related benchmarks to assess, support, and mentor staff, and then support individualized professional development by tailoring suggestions to assessed Illinois ECE Competency-based needs.

Future Directions and Connecting Points

We look forward to the Illinois ECE Competency work at the state level. Assessment data collected through cross-institutional rubrics will enable a close look at programming and the development of quality enhancements

and improvements. We foresee the ability to strengthen workforce pathways, particularly in terms of creating cohesiveness between professional development and higher education systems. This cohesiveness through the development and implementation of Illinois ECE Competencies will allow both ECE preparation systems and ECE professional development systems to share common language, definition and measurement of practice. In addition, we anticipate the development of Illinois ECE Competencies as an essential infrastructure that will enhance and support cross-institutional articulation, which has been a persistent issue in our state.

In terms of replication, one of the main strengths of our project's process has been attention to the integrity of the original benchmarks in place and to the quality controls that informed the review of each step of our conversion to Illinois ECE Competencies. Although to arrive at the Illinois ECE Competencies was thoughtful, arduous, and at times tedious, it was essential that replication efforts be steeped in existing systems and stakeholders be invested in continuous review processes as Illinois ECE Competencies are generated.

Moving Forward with Competency-Based Assessment

For years, 2- and 4-year institutions in Illinois have developed courses and coursework around the 347 Gateways benchmarks to align with the state credentialing system. Faculty has also worked to meet the demands of our students for seamless course articulation pathways between their unique programs. Course titles among institutions were usually not the same, course objectives differed, course content varied, and assessment of student learning consistently became the focus of conversation, due to the variations between the participating schools. Institutions "owned" their assessments and the concept of an assessment or assignment that they could agree on became a dauntless process. Statewide conversations often led to the idea of using competency-based assessments. Each institution, thinking individually and collectively about Illinois ECE Competencies, left with ideas and no tangible approach for change. The ISU, IVCC, ICC, and HCC partnership, in its desire to unify and stack the Gateways ECE

Credentials, created the catalyst to organize the existing benchmarks into larger-scope competencies, which were then categorized into professional levels. For example, Illinois ECE Competencies (made up of related benchmarks) that were determined to be critical skills for teacher assistants were placed under Level 2 (Illinois Gateways to Opportunity, 2016). The benchmarks did not change; the grouping and headings changed.

The team realigned each of the 347 benchmarks into 56 professional competencies (labeled by the group) spanning four levels of the Gateways ECE Credentials. These can be assessed, thus refining the standards structure to a manageable, comprehensive cross-institutional assessment system. Competency-based education makes sense in teacher education programs because it translates standards and benchmarks into specific, measurable behaviors. Competencies define the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for teachers at progressive levels of their professional development. This structure is congruent with early childhood teacher education programs that scaffold from introductory to methods courses and include practicum capstones in both community college and 4-year institutions. Participant faculty from ICC and IVCC believe competency-based education acknowledges alignment of assessments (not assignments) within our courses, leaving pedagogical individuality in the capable hands of faculty. This demonstrates a cascading effect of core competencies within our 2- and 4-year ECE programs.

As we engage our students to build curriculum around sound developmentally appropriate practices (such as teaching to children's interests and differentiating instruction, for example) of what children know and are able to do, educators of pre-service teachers must also focus our attention on what we expect practitioners to comprehend and demonstrate at varying levels of employment. This understanding can be achieved by identifying course articulation through the Illinois ECE Competencies that embrace fundamental knowledge, skills, and dispositions and support development and learning of young children and families at each professional level of practice, i.e., knowing, doing, and leading.

Continuing discourse on articulation throughout Illinois includes planned statewide meetings to inform 2- and 4-year faculty about the ECE professional competencies that evolved within this partnership. The focus must remain on our workforce pathways in terms of congruency between professional development and higher education systems. The transformation to competency-based assessment and cross-institutional assessment processes will be realized through invested acceptance from ECE higher education faculty across Illinois, as the state has already adopted the competency-based credentialing model.

Giving faculty time to analyze and review the competency-based structure may be the first step toward acceptance of CIAS. We believe results of this practice will give community colleges and 4-year institutions strong rationale to formulate widespread articulation agreements. Competency-based education allows every higher education institution to continue building high-quality teacher preparation programs, in Illinois and beyond, through the alignment of shared competency-based assessments and rubrics that reflect on what practitioners/students know, are able to do, and/or are able to demonstrate to others. The strength of this system ensures that highly competent teachers at every level of the spectrum, from teacher assistants to master teachers to future higher education faculty, are available to facilitate and nurture growth and development of our youngest learners to their fullest potential.

References

Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Squires, J. H., Clarke Brown, K., & Horowitz, M. (2015). T*he state of preschool 2014: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Fuller, B. (2011). College credentials and caring: How teacher training could lift young children. In E. F. Zigler, W. S. Gilliam, & W. S. Barnett (Eds.), *The pre-K debates: Current controversies & issues* (pp. 57–63). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Gomez, R. E., Kagan, S. L., & Fox, E. A. (2015). Professional development of the early childhood education teaching workforce in the United States: An overview. *Professional Development in Education, 41*(2), 169-186.

Illinois Gateways to Opportunity. (2016). *ECE credential levels 2-5*. Retrieved from http://www.ilgateways.com/en/ece-credential-level-2-5

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi:10.17226/19401

Schilder, D. (2016). *Early childhood teacher education policies: Research review and state trends*. New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes.

Stayton, V. C., Smith, B. J., Dietrich, S. L., & Bruder, M. B. (2011). Comparison of state certification and professional association standards in early childhood special education. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 32*(1), 24-37.

U.S. Department of Education (2016). *Race to the top fund*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html

Whitebook, M. (2003). *Early education quality: Higher teacher qualifications for better learning environments—A review of the literature*. Retrieved from http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/wp-content/uploads/2003/01/Early_Ed_Quality.pdf

Whitebook, M., & Austin, L. J. E. (2015). *Early childhood higher education: Taking stock across the states*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

Appendix I
ECE Competencies – Master Table

The successful *Teacher Assistant* (Level 2)	The competent *Teacher Practioner* (Level 3)
Human Growth & Development	
HGD1: Identifies and describes theories of typical and atypical growth in all developmental domains and the interaction between individual and contextual factors on development and learning.	
HGD2: Describes the interrelationship between developmental domains, holistic well-being, and adaptive/living skills.	
HGD3: Defines how cultural, familial, biological, and environmental influences, including stress, trauma, protective factors, and resilience, impact children's well-being, and learning.	
Health Safety & Well-Being	
HSW1: Articulates components of a safe and healthy environment.	HSW3: Creates a healthy and safe environment.
HSW2: Maintains a safe & healthy environment.	HSW4: Assesses healthy and safe early childhood environments.
	HSW5: Designs and implements learning opportunities emphasizing healthy bodies, healthy lifestyles, and a healthy environment.
Observation & Assessment	
	O&A1: Describes a variety of valid assessment procedures, screening tools, and observation methods and their role in monitoring children's development and learning and in informing the instructional process.
	O&A2: Describes culturally and linguistically responsive assessment procedures, screening tools, and observation methods and appropriate strategies for engaging families in the assessment process.
	O&A3: Selects and uses **legal and ethical** assessment procedures, screening tools, and observation methods, and organizational strategies to gain knowledge of children and their familial and social contexts.

The proficient *Lead Teacher* (Level 4)	The influential *Master Teacher* (Level 5)
Human Growth & Development	
HGD4: Interprets children's unique developmental patterns and identifies supportive resources for children who may require further assessment. Demonstrates knowledge of processes of first and second language acquisition.	HGD5: Integrates research, developmental theories, and observational data to make decisions about evidence-based practice supporting children's learning and development.
	HGD6: Justifies and promotes the use of evidence-based practices supportive of each child's unique patterns of development and learning.
Health Safety & Well-Being	
HSW6: Collaborates with families and community organizations to support children's healthy development and learning.	HSW7: Identifies plans and procedures that support healthy and safe early childhood program practices.
	HSW8: Develops and implements policies, methods, plans, and guidelines reflective of healthy and safe program practices.
Observation & Assessment	
OA4: Identifies the impact and influence of external factors on assessment practices.	O&A7: Articulates **and advocates for legal and ethical** data collection, analysis and interpretation procedures supportive of child development and learning, program evaluation, and program improvement initiatives.
O&A5: Evaluates and selects appropriate strategies for collecting, measuring, disseminating, and utilizing observation, screening, and assessment data which are responsive to the strengths and challenges of individual children and reflective of family goals and priorities.	O&A8: Utilizes assessment data to support child development and learning and program development.
O&A6: Implements and adapts effective observation, screening, assessment strategies that engage families and inform group and individual planning and instruction.	

The successful *Teacher Assistant* (Level 2)	The competent *Teacher Practioner* (Level 3)
Curriculum & Program Design	
	CUR1: Identifies culturally, linguistically, and individually responsive planning strategies which utilize assessment and observation data.
	CUR2: Synthesizes the relationship between standards, evidence-based practices, culturally and individually responsive teaching strategies and curricular planning.
	CUR3: Plans, implements, and assesses appropriate learning experiences using knowledge of individual children's healthy development, abilities, interests, and needs.
Interactions, Relationships & Environments	
IRE1: Describes the role of the environment in supporting children's development.	IRE3: Identifies factors that contribute to positive interactions with the environment.
IRE2: Articulates the importance of relationships in supporting positive developmental and behavioral outcomes.	IRE4: Designs learning environments and activities supportive of healthy development and learning.

The proficient *Lead Teacher* (Level 4)	The influential *Master Teacher* (Level 5)
Curriculum & Program Design	
CUR4: Describes appropriate methods supportive of young children's development and learning.	CUR10: Creates and assesses program policies, procedures, and plans using current research, theory and knowledge of children to optimize healthy child development and learning.
CUR5: Describes appropriate content supportive of young children's development and learning.	
CUR6: Selects appropriate content, aligned with relevant standards.	
CUR7: Selects and implements appropriate methods and instructional strategies which actively engage children in developmentally, appropriate content.	
CUR8: Differentiates instruction to support diverse learning styles and abilities through incorporation of evidence-based practices, including universal design, and children's interests.	
CUR9: Adapts instructional practice through use of appropriate tools and strategies to support the development and learning of individual children.	
Interactions, Relationships & Environments	
IRE5: Creates engaging environments that meet the diverse development and learning needs of each child.	IRE6: Considers the relationship between curriculum, relationships, and child development and learning in analyzing environments.
	IRE7: Facilitates the design of engaging environments based on appropriate theory, policy, and guidelines.

The successful *Teacher Assistant* (Level 2)	The competent *Teacher Practioner* (Level 3)
Family & Community Relationships	
FCR1: Outlines the role and influence of families and communities on children's development, learning, and the early childhood setting.	FCR4: Identifies, selects, and promotes meaningful connections to community resources that are responsive to the unique strengths, priorities, concerns and needs of young children and their families.
FCR2: Identifies culturally and linguistically responsive communication and collaboration strategies designed to engage families in their children's care and education.	FCR5: Describes culturally and linguistically responsive communication and collaboration strategies which facilitate culturally sensitive expectations for children's development and learning and family engagement in assessment and goal setting.
FCR3: Identifies and models respect for families by using strengths-based, culturally responsive practices.	FCR6: Selects and implements culturally and linguistically appropriate procedures designed to gather information about children and families, including child and family strengths, priorities, concerns, and needs, and collaboratively integrates this information into child and family goals.
Professionalism	
PRO1: Demonstrates professionalism in image, behavior, and disposition.	PRO3: Aligns professional practice with applicable standards and guidelines, legal and ethical considerations for confidentiality and impartiality, state and federal laws, and the expectations of relevant professional organizations.
PRO2: Describes historical and present-day representations of the fields of early childhood general education, early childhood special education, and early intervention and how individual experiences and values influence perspective and practice within these fields.	PRO4: Utilizes effective, ethical, culturally competent communication and collaboration skills when interacting with children families, and colleagues and as a member of early childhood teams.

The proficient *Lead Teacher* (Level 4)	The influential *Master Teacher* (Level 5)
Family & Community Relationships	
	FCR7: Designs and advocates for procedures, plans, and policies, informing child and program goals, in collaboration with families and other team members.
Professionalism	
PRO5: Engages in reflection and the design of a professional development plan with the goal of improving professional practice and fostering professional growth.	PRO7: Understands processes, procedures and identified roles within successful early childhood teams.
PRO6: Creates a professional philosophy that guides development as a practitioner and advocate.	PRO8: Engages in written, verbal and non-verbal communication skills with children, families, and colleagues that support culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse populations; program functioning; family and community collaboration; and healthy child development and learning.
	PRO9: Applies key legal, ethical, regulatory, and interpersonal skills reflective of professionalism and leadership within early childhood settings.
	PRO10: Designs and participates in collaborative systems and proactive, visionary leadership that ensures the healthy functioning of the early childhood program/ agency and the children and families served.

Partnership Description

Southern Illinois University (SIU) is a nationally ranked public research university located in the southern region of Illinois. In 2015, SIU served 17,292 students in undergraduate and graduate programs; 74% of these students were Illinois residents.

Shawnee Community College (SCC) is a Class I community college that serves six counties. According to the 2010 census data, 14.7% of families in the SCC district fall below the federal poverty level. SCC serves approximately 7,000 individuals annually. The average age of SCC students is 33; the median age is 25. Faculty to student ratio is 16:1.

Southeastern Illinois College in Harrisburg, Illinois, with an extension center in Carmi, Illinois, serves more than 52,000 district residents in the counties of Gallatin, Hardin, Pope and Saline, as well as portions of Hamilton, Johnson, Williamson and White. The college ranks sixth in the state for degree and certificate completion and offers nearly 120 certificate and degree programs.

John A. Logan College is accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges, located in Carterville, Illinois, and serves students from five counties. JALC students seek to transfer to baccalaureate programs (28%), engage in career education programs (12%), enroll in continuing education (17%), are admitted to the Center for Business & Industry program (36%), and pursue adult education (7%).

Rend Lake College has been nationally accredited since 1969. It is located in Ina, Illinois, with almost 5,400 undergraduate students and approximately 4,100 non-credit students enrolled. Rend Lake College is committed to offering programs and services of the highest quality that are affordable to its constituents. The College maintains a student-friendly atmosphere, making its services as accessible as possible. Courses and programs offered by the College are transferable or lead to attractive employment opportunities.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

John A. Logan College: http://jalc.edu/

Rend Lake College: http://www.rlc.edu

Shawnee Community College: http://www.shawneecc.edu/

Southeastern Illinois College: http://www.sic.edu/

Southern Illinois University: http://siu.edu/

CHAPTER 12

Career Pathways in Early Childhood in Rural Communities

Christie McIntyre, Stacy D. Thompson, Diane King, Ruth Smith, and Marilyn Toliver

Key Words: career pathways, early childhood workforce pathways, early childhood math, English language learners, Gateways scholarships, professional development, rural communities, workforce development

Varied Pathways

Current and future early childhood education (ECE) professionals pursue diverse pathways to their chosen vocation, from high school to community college to the university. This is especially true in a rural area. By investing in early learning initiatives that support the ECE workforce, higher education can invest in the sustainability of rural communities and families. One initiative in Illinois is the Gateways Scholarship program, which provides eligible practitioners with a portion of their tuition and fees to pursue educational endeavors in Early Childhood Education for degrees, certificates, endorsements and credentials. When young children have college educated teachers/caregivers and administrators, knowledgeable in areas of child development and developmentally appropriate practice, children's learning outcomes are improved as is the quality and consistency of their care. This is a benefit to the overall community.

The Great START Wage Supplement Program is another key component of the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity Professional Development System. This has a noticeable impact on the economic development of our

rural communities. The Great START (Strategies to Attract and Retain Teachers) Program rewards practitioners who attain education beyond the basic college requirements for the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The Great START Program builds on the Gateways Scholarship Program by providing monetary incentives to practitioners who achieve certificates, credentials, and degrees, and who continue to work in the same early care and education settings. Both of these initiatives are important elements which help promote economic development in our rural region, because they help to ensure that affordable, quality early care and education opportunities are available for working families, and that highly qualified practitioners are teaching and caring for our young children. "Many rural families lack access to information, resources, income and skills to provide essential early child development experiences. Programs that emphasize both cognitive and social skill-building, especially those that target low-income households, are a rural community's best investment" (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014, p. 29).

While the poverty rankings of Illinois' counties vary, the fact remains that our institutions serve eight of the 15 poorest counties in the state (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). This poverty contributes to the life choices that students are forced to make. One of the major choices they have is whether to obtain a job or attend classes to obtain a degree. Due to limited employment opportunities in the region, the option to simultaneously do both, either full- or part-time, is not always available. Because of this, many students must determine to work full-time and attend college on a part-time basis, often taking a minimal amount of credit hours per semester. As a result, students take only the coursework necessary for immediate employment or advancement in early childhood education. This trend continues to contribute to a constant need for incremental completers rather than AAS or BS degrees.

The trend of part-time college attendance is what has driven our institutions for some time to offer incremental certificates. The Gateways Credentials process has been the impetus for all of our institutions creating career pathways that are more comparable to each other than in the past

and allow for a progress toward full degree articulation agreements, especially in the non-certified programs.

While poverty is a large contributing factor for enrollment in the early childhood degree programs at all of our institutions, population also plays a large part. Six of our 18 counties have population below 10,000. Another six counties have population below 20,000. Only two of the remaining six counties have a population above 40,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). These low numbers contribute to low enrollment, which requires justification of our programs to the administration at our various institutions. We are able to justify our service to our region if we can document completers at various stages of their career advancement, whether it was earning the first certificate with a minimal amount of courses at a community college or attaining a 4-year degree at the university.

Both the poverty and population issues contribute to a third factor that must be addressed by our institutions: travel distance, time, and cost to attend college. Because these are common concerns among students, our institutions have begun offering more courses online. Some of the community colleges in our group now offer the full ECE degree online. Most of the online students tend to seek full-time employment in the field of early childhood care and education while taking courses.

In order to prepare and support an effective early childhood workforce, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has developed a *Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* (LeMoine, 2008). The blueprint outlines six essential policy areas: (1) professional standards; (2) career pathways; (3) articulation; (4) advisory structure; (5) data; and (6) financing. This chapter articulates how the higher education faculty from four community colleges and one university worked collaboratively to improve the career pathways for early childhood professionals within our shared rural space of southern Illinois.

Our work coalesced around the first three essential policy areas noted by NAEYC in their Blueprint (LeMoine, 2008). We believed that identifying common assessments aligned to state standards would enhance our

collaboration by providing a common language for future course articulation. During our work together, we also shared how we were addressing the varied career paths among early childhood educators in our region. Finally, we have begun to develop articulation agreements among the higher education institutions that did not previously exist.

Standards

Educators have identified essential practices in early childhood education for over a century (Follari, 2011). Over time, these essential practices have evolved into standards that "create a shared language and evidence-based frame of reference so that practitioners, decision makers, and families may talk together about early learning" (NAEYC, 2002, p. 2). Standards are used to inform public policy, as well as to define professional development experiences and college coursework. Standards informed our work in two significant ways. The state standards for early childhood teacher educators and the Gateways standards guided our conversations about course articulations. We shared key assignments and assessments, that we use in these courses, to determine our students' progress toward meeting the standards. This resonates with the work of another grant partnership that is developing "uber competencies." We also referred to the WIDA (an acronym created to represent the three states involved in initial grant funding which started the organization. WIDA then stood for World-class Instructional Design and Assessment, but that no longer applies and presently, it is just WIDA. WIDA provides researched and practice-based resources to support the language development and academic achievement of children from diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds from https://www.wida.us/aboutus/mission.aspx) standards and the latest English Learner policies in Illinois to develop an English Language Learners (ELL) workshop for local early childhood educators (WIDA, 2014).

One of our goals for the EPPI grant was to design curriculum that prepares future early childhood professionals with the knowledge and skills they will need to work with English Language Learners and their families. According to the authors of *Why Rural Matters 2013-2014* (Johnson et al.,

2014), it is critical that Illinois address the needs of diverse populations in rural areas. As more and more children are speaking languages other than English and are having to learn English while they are studying other content important for their future endeavors in school, it is imperative that professionals understand the best methods for teaching these children. The number of children learning English as they come into U.S. schools is exponentially increasing, sometimes as much as 300% to 400% (Olsen, 2006) with the majority of students speaking Spanish as their primary language. In fact, we need more research addressing literacy practices for supporting preschoolers who are ELLs (August, Shanahan, & Escamilla, 2009; Pappamihiel & Lynn, 2014; Zaslow, Tout, Halle, Whittaker, & Lavelle, 2010). We also kept in mind the large number of children around the university and in the surrounding communities who were ELLs. This regional need guided us as we planned a workshop for those who work with such children in rural settings. Nineteen local teachers responded to our ELL Professional Development Survey. The survey revealed that over half of the ECE surveyed identified themselves as beginners in their knowledge related to ELLs or as still learning the associated vocabulary. A majority of the educators were interested in learning more about culturally responsive teaching strategies, strategies for working with ELL parents and families, strategies for differentiating instruction for ELL children, and knowing when an ELL child does or does not need an IEP, as well as strategies for building academic language with ELL children and families. The results of this survey were used to plan the ELL workshop, where participants were exposed to culturally responsive teaching strategies and strategies for building academic language.

Career Pathways

Over 60% of children under the age of 5 are cared for by someone other than a parent (Demma & LeMoine, 2010) and the majority of those professionals in the early childhood workforce are not well equipped for this role (Herzenberg, Price, & Bradley, 2005). Additionally, there are state and nationally-funded initiatives to provide early childhood programming

access for all preschool children. This has led to demands for more qualified individuals and degree programs to train ECE professionals. There is not a *one size fits all* degree program, therefore, student trajectories should not be limited to a traditional 4-year program at a university. In fact, Lutton (2013) noted that providing "portable, stackable credentials" (p. 52) is a strategy that can promote and support individuals in a long term pathway toward an Early Childhood career. This pathway should be balanced, including general education courses as well as early childhood-focused coursework. This balance provides the necessary background for transfer options. As indicated by recommendations for creating and improving sustainability of quality in early childhood education in the Early Childhood Workforce Supply Report (Board of Governors for Higher Education, 2006), institutions of higher education are encouraged to "promote access" by supporting the development of innovative programs through articulation agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions, offering varied delivery styles, location options and flexible scheduling options for individual courses to accommodate work schedules and busy lifestyles.

These recommendations are again brought to light in the brief that was released by the National Academies of Science, *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). According to this report, there needs to be an option for early childhood practitioners to attain baccalaureate degrees, ensuring consistent content and quality in early childhood coursework and degrees. The additional literature, for example Whitebook, Gomby, Bellm, Sakai, and Kipnis (2009) in their Executive Summary of the Policy Report, supports the recommendation of the brief that professional development and higher education pathways need to be created so they are accessible and relevant to those already working in the field, thereby reinforcing the need for a qualified Early Childhood workforce and ensuring pathways for upward mobility for those in the field.

The workforce in our region is in need of an educational pathway that can be stackable. "Effective career pathways are made up of portable, stackable credentials-those that move with the individual and build increasing

knowledge and skill levels over the course of a career" (Lutton, 2013). These pathways need to be applicable for continuing education credits (CEU), for an associate degree, a baccalaureate degree, or a graduate degree for those working toward achieving ECE Credentials for professional development and/or licensure. The four community colleges within the southern Illinois region provide educational services to over 15 counties, with one senior institution in our region. One of the goals for this collaboration was to extend the articulation agreements to the licensure program among the institutions providing the diverse pathways; that would increase the number of early childhood professionals who provide high-quality care and education for young children.

As primary institutions of higher education in the southern Illinois region, it is important to keep in mind the diverse needs and goals of the students who attend our institutions. While we hope the early childhood students will continue their path toward a bachelor degree, we recognize that all future ECE educators should be supported in their development of a solid foundation in early childhood knowledge, skills, and practices whether they are taking a single class, seeking a credential, or completing a degree program. Despite the fact that Illinois and many other states are working to improve professional standards within the ECE profession, the individuals currently working in the field are considered to be non-traditional students with varying life issues (Zaslow et al., 2010). These potential students have the need for educational pathways for professional development purposes, however, many obstacles may stand in their way.

Therefore, our collaboration has resulted in several transfer degrees that offer balanced curriculum and provide stackable, portable options for the students. Additionally, the faculty at the participating institutions have worked to align their ECE programs with the Gateways Credential requirements for student attainment. Demma and LeMoine (2010) state that a professional development system for early childhood professionals needs to contain research-based standards. The alignment of the credentials in the anticipated articulation agreements will provide a more portable education that promotes the professionals in early childhood careers.

Southern Illinois is a unique area that is geographically removed from the rest of the state. Many opportunities for professional development take place three or more hours north of our region, and our early childhood professionals need more consistent access to professional development within our region. The Illinois Department of Human Resources (IDHR) reported that 392 child care directors (71%) stated they had created professional development plans for their centers and 313 directors (56.7%) individual staff/professional development plans for teaching/instructional staff (Bruckner, Whitehead, Ernst, & Presley, 2013). Our fall Math Workshop attendance confirmed that early childhood educators are interested in professional development opportunities. The "Making Math Meaningful and FUN for Young Children" workshop was offered on two days. The presentation covered the five areas of math—Number Sense, Measurement, Geometry, Algebra and Data Analysis/Probability. Ideas and activities were based on the new Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards. Participants actively engaged in activities to help strengthen their understanding of these concepts and to practice strategies for implementing math experiences with preschool children. There were 23 participants on Friday, September 11, 2015, and 51 participants on Saturday, September 12, 2015. Participants included teachers from child care centers, ISBE Pre-K, family child care, and Head Start, as well as higher education faculty and Early Childhood college students. Evaluations from the 70 plus participants strongly agreed that the outcomes of this professional development experience were clearly identified as knowledge or skills that these participants should gain as a result of their participation. The Southern Illinois AEYC donated to the two days of workshops by paying for a portion of the lunches. They also recruited members for NAEYC–SIAEYC and had door prizes and gifts for new members. In order to provide needed educational opportunities as a partnership, we hope to work more closely with CCRR, the child care directors, and the elementary school principals to offer workshops that would be meaningful to the southern Illinois educators.

Articulation

Articulation agreements are beneficial in many ways, including with the workforce, the institutions that are involved, and the state where the institutions are located, both directly and indirectly. Cassidy (2015) noted that an articulation agreement is beneficial for the higher educational system if it is done well. Cost benefit analyses revealed that in one state, it saved the state money per student per year. However, this is not realized for those students who transfer from a community college to a 4-year institution and do not receive credit for the courses they took at the 2-year institution. Cassidy (2015) additionally asserts that if there are good articulation agreements, the 2-year degree can provide an entrée into the 4-year institution for many students. Investing in early childhood programs provides returns in "human capital and economic competitiveness" (Demma & LeMoine, 2010, p. 7). The more educated the professionals are the better programs we have, especially for children who are economically disadvantaged. Many early childhood programs have demonstrated longitudinal positive effects well past early childhood, such as the HighScope Perry Preschool project and the Abecedarian project, but these are just two out of many studies that show these positive economic outcomes (Yoshikawa et al., 2013).

In creating comprehensive education systems for early childhood professionals, Demma and LeMoine (2010) noted several challenges that need to be addressed. One is professional development policies (p. 3). Additionally, they recommend articulations between 2- and 4-year institutions to coordinate programs for those working with young children. An additional, though critical, challenge is "increased access to professional development opportunities" (p. 4) noting that many early childhood professionals do not have access to professional development, especially higher education degree programs. Cassidy (2015) noted that "good articulation agreements are cost effective for a state's higher education system" (p. 2).

The main purpose of the call for proposals for the EPPI grant was for universities to work on articulation agreements with community colleges in order to create a clear pathway for students pursuing a degree in Early Childhood Education, both licensure and non-licensure. With this goal in

mind, we met several times to talk about common courses that students would take at the individual community colleges that would be articulated into the university. Having common courses across the community colleges would allow students to have more flexibility where they attended without losing credits that they had earned. It also meant that when the students transferred to the university, it would be easier to advise students through the transfer process. In theory, while this appeared to be a simple goal, it was not. Each community college had standing articulation agreements, mostly with the university's non-licensure degree, and the structured licensure degree was more challenging to articulate. The licensure program was required to make modifications to its program coursework due to recent changes in the state's Early Childhood Education teaching license. These changes have impacted the coursework required within the first two years of college, which means that the entire program is more prescriptive than in prior iterations of the degree plan.

Because one of our goals was to provide students with stackable, portable educational plans, we reviewed and discussed the state standards to better understand the implications of requirements and to appreciate the exquisitely fine-tuned degree that needed to be created. This helped to further define the courses for articulation with the community college partners and took up a great deal of time in meetings as we went through the state and national standards and discussed how these would be covered in the different courses, in order to provide students with the education that would best serve them in their chosen career path. Our work culminated with the identification of four common courses in early childhood that we can articulate in the future. Those courses include a course in each of the following areas: play and guidance, physical education, children and the arts, and diversity, culture, and education.

Conclusion

The collaboration among the community college and university partners yielded three positive outcomes. To begin with, each partner became more aware of how the various programs were addressing state and national

standards, which led to the final selection of four common courses to be articulated among the institutions. Momentum within the state of Illinois has recently focused on meeting the needs of English Language Learners (ELL), as well as, on increasing teacher competencies related to the instruction of mathematics in Early Childhood. This dialogue across the state and in our region led to the second positive outcome for this grant. The Early Childhood Innovations Grant supported two professional development workshops focused on mathematics instruction and instruction for ELLs in the southern region of the state, where these opportunities are not usually available to early childhood educators. The final outcome from this partnership was increased awareness and respect for the different cultures and communities within which we work. The faculty from the university became more aware of the need for portable and stackable credentials across our rural region, and the community college faculty became more aware of state requirements for licensure and how these requirements influence programming within the first two years.

We recommend that future partnerships take a little time in the beginning to listen to one another to better understand how partners' cultural milieus vary. While each partner is responding to different requirements for degrees and programs, we have the common goal of addressing the educational needs of current and future early childhood educators. Illinois Gateways Credentials and the Early Learning Standards that can guide conversations as partners consider how best to meet the needs of their various regions. It is helpful to use these documents to focus the partnership on learning outcomes that the partners are striving to achieve. Finally, seek input from stakeholders and the intended audience. Surveys and focus groups can assist in selecting the topics that will be most relevant to the early childhood educators in each region. Just as we seek to understand a child's individual needs and his/her development within a social environment, we as early childhood professionals should seek to understand our peers' needs within their higher education settings.

References

August, D., Shanahan, T., & Escamilla, K. (2009). English language learners: Developing literacy in second-language learners-Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth. *Journal of Literacy Research, 41*(1), 432-452.

Board of Governors for Higher Education. (2006). *Early childhood education workforce supply: A report to the General Assembly on Public Act 05-245.* Hartford, CT: Department of Higher Education State of Connecticut.

Bruckner, C., Whitehead, J., Ernst, J. D., & Presley, D. (2013). *Illinois salary and staffing survey of licensed child care facilities: FY 2013.* Springfield, IL: Illinois Department of Human Services.

Cassidy, D. J. (2015). *A perspective on early childhood education and articulation.* Washington, DC: Early Educator Central. Retrieved from https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/documents/A%20Perspective%20on%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20and%20Articulation.pdf

Demma, R., & LeMoine, S. (2010). *Issue brief: Building an early childhood professional development system.* NGA Center for Best Practices. Retrieved from: http://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/center-publications/page-edu-publications/col2-content/main-content-list/building-an-early-childhood-prof.html

Follari, L. M. (2011). *Foundations and best practices in early childhood education: History, theories, and approaches to learning.* Boston: Pearson.

Herzenberg, S. Price, M., & Bradley, D. (2005). *Losing ground in early childhood education: Declining workforce qualifications in an expanding industry, 1979 – 2004.* Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Johnson, J., Showalter, D., Klein, R., & Lester, C. (2014, May). *Why rural matters 2013-2014: The condition of rural education in the 50 states.* Washington, DC: The Rural School and Community Trust.

LeMoine, S. (2008). *Workforce designs: A policy blueprint for state early childhood professional development systems* (Public Policy Report). Washington, DC: National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Retrieved from http://www.naeyc.org/policy/ecwsi#blueprint

Lutton, A. (2013). Supporting successful degree completion by early childhood professionals. *Young Children, 68*(4), 51–53.

NAEYC & National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. (2002). *Early learning standards: Creating the conditions for success.* Joint position statement. Washington, DC: Authors. Retrieved from http:// www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/position_statement.pdf

Olsen, B. (2006). Using sociolinguistic methods to uncover speaker meaning in teacher interview transcripts. *The International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 19*(2), 147-161.

Pappamihiel, E., & Lynn, C. A. (2014). How can monolingual teachers take advantage of learners' native language in class? *Childhood Education, 90*(4), 291-297.

U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.) *American fact finder.* Retrieved from http://factfinder. census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml

Whitebook, M., Gomby, D., Bellm, D., Sakai, L., & Kipnis, F. (2009). *Preparing teachers of young children: The current state of knowledge, and a blueprint for the future. Part 1: Teacher preparation and professional development in grades K-12 and in early care and education: differences and similarities, and implications for research* (Policy Report). Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED505296

WIDA. (2014). *Mission & the WIDA story.* Retrieved from https://www.wida.us/ aboutus/mission.aspx

Yoshikawa, H., Weiland, C., Brooks-Gunn, J., Burchinal, M. R., Graham, F. P., Esponosa, L. M., . . . & Zaslow, M. J. (2013). *Investing in our future: The evidence base on preschool education.* Ann Arbor, MI: Society for Research in Child Develoment. Retrieved from http://home. uchicago.edu/~ludwigj/papers/Investing%20in%20Our%20Future%20 Preschool%20Education%202013.pdf

Zaslow, M., Tout, K., Halle, T., Whittaker, J. V., & Lavelle, B. (2010). *Toward the identification of features of effective professional development for early childhood educators: Literature review.* Retrieved from https://www.google.com/sear ch?q=Toward+the+Identification+of+Features+of+Effective+Professional +Development+for+Early+Childhood+Educators%3A+Literature+Revie w&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8

Partnership Description

Millikin University, founded in 1901, is a private university located on 75 acres in central Illinois. Millikin offers undergraduate majors in the fields of Arts and Sciences, Business, Fine Arts, and Professional Studies. Graduate degrees are offered in Business Administration and Nursing. Millikin's student body consists of approximately 2,200 undergraduates and 80 graduate students (57% female, 43% male). Seventy-nine % of the 2015 Freshman class came from the state of Illinois, with 73% white and non-Hispanic/Latino, 14% African American, and 6% Hispanic/Latino. We chose to collaborate with two local community colleges for this grant since many of their early childhood education students transfer to Millikin.

Richland Community College (RCC) is located in Decatur, Illinois. RCC is a fully accredited 2-year institution serving students in eight surrounding counties. Its student population includes 83% white, 15% African American, 1.4% Hispanic, 0.9% Asian, and 0.3% American Indian. The college serves approximately 7,600 students while the Continuing and Professional Education Division provides professional development courses, community education courses, and workforce training to over 4,000 residents annually. RCC offers baccalaureate/transfer, technical, continuing education, and community education programs to local residents.

Lincoln Land Community College (LLCC) is a comprehensive community college with its main campus in Springfield and outreach centers in Beardstown, Jacksonville, Litchfield, and Taylorville, Illinois. LLCC serves approximately 16,000 students annually with credit and non-credit courses. Fifty-eight percent of the students are enrolled part time. The majority of LLCC's students are enrolled in baccalaureate/transfer programs (55%) and occupational/vocational programs (29%).

For More About the Partner Institutions:

Millikin University: https://www.millikin.edu/admission-aid/why-study-mu/quick-facts

Quick Facts About Richland Community College. http://www.richland.edu/about

Lincoln Land Community College: http://www.llcc.edu/research/facts-about-llcc/

CHAPTER 13

Supporting Change in the Education of English Language Learners and Young Children in Central Illinois

Joyce Bezdicek, Georgette Comuntzis Page, and Jeanne Helm

Key Words: academic advising, articulation, diversity, English language learners, ESL/bilingual endorsement, professional development, Project Approach, Reggio Emilia, workforce development

Overview: Strengthening the Workforce

Specific literature in education points to the need for preparing teacher candidates in the fields of English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education (Bezdicek & García, 2012; Collier & Thomas, 2009; Crawford, 2004; Espinosa, 2013) as well as supporting teachers' efforts toward child-centered practices (Vecchi, 2010). The authors of this chapter worked together and took a three-pronged approach toward meeting such challenges within the Decatur, Illinois, community. One aspect of the work involved supporting a cohort of educators in completing the required coursework for their ESL or bilingual endorsement. Another aspect involved professional development for educators of young children. The third element involved better alignment of coursework among two community colleges and a university that made up this partnership.

Our Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grant focused on the need for strengthening the workforce of early childhood educators who are serving young children and families in the Decatur community. Decatur is a small town in central Illinois with urban

issues (e.g., inequities in distribution of wealth, race, and poverty) that needs support in many different realms, especially in educating young children. As faculty in teacher education, we visit local schools and work with teachers. We have noted that there are teacher shortages especially among those that work with children who qualify as English language learners (ELLs). There are also needs for professional development for these teachers such as supporting them and their assistants concerning practices that provide children with creative learning experiences. The goal of our grant work was to offer local educators opportunities to improve their practice and work more effectively with children and families in our community.

Consequently, we concentrated our efforts in three main areas; first, we supported a cohort of teachers in the completion of 18 credit hours in the English as a second language (ESL) or the bilingual endorsement. Over the past several years, local early childhood education (ECE) administrators have discussed the challenges they face as they work to find educators with ESL/bilingual endorsements, plus the knowledge base and skills to meet the specific educational needs of English language learners. Our grant partners serve English language learners in the Decatur, Illinois, community. They stated an interest in professional development that would target their particular needs in serving ELLs and their families and benefited from funding through the purchase of language and cultural materials for this use.

Secondly, we provided professional development to the Early Head Start and Head Start programs in the Decatur community. Support of these programs has been ongoing for many years; however, our grant project offered the opportunity to create a more formalized plan, with specific foci as well as materials and resources for these professional development sessions. Thus, we were able to address the main focus of concern for the staff in our community Head Start programs, discovering the need for more child-centered experiences, ones that support the young child's creativity and interests.

Finally, the third area of our grant involved articulation with 2-year institutions in Decatur and Springfield, Illinois. In the past, we had agreements

between Millikin University, Richland Community College and Lincoln Land Community College; however, they had not been reviewed for quite some time. Our goal was to examine the early childhood education courses offered at these three schools with the intention of updating our articulation agreements. As we discussed these courses, we shared syllabi and talked about needed changes in order to determine which courses students would transfer from the 2-year to the 4-year institutions.

We believe the topics of our grant are relevant to other 2-year and 4-year teacher preparation institutions as well as to state policy makers. Our work points to ESL/bilingual and early childhood teacher education as areas of need in our community and relevant and important foci for faculty and administrators in 2-year and 4-year institutions of higher learning in central Illinois. The issues that we have discovered while engaging in this work are also important for state policy makers, who need to be aware of the constraints that educators face when advancing to higher levels of professional expertise.

Background and Significance

Bilingual-English as a Second Language Education Need

The population of children who qualify as English language learners (ELLs) in the U.S. continues to rise (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), the number of ELLs in U.S. schools increased from 8.8% for the 2003-2004 academic year to 9.3% for 2013-2014. The most common home language reported by this growing ELL population is Spanish, followed by Arabic and Chinese. In Illinois, the number of children who qualify as ELLs is also increasing. The 2014–2015 Illinois Report Card (n.d.) reports that ELLs account for 10.3% of students in Illinois schools, up from 9% in 2011–2012. School personnel are encouraged to plan for serving this growing population by hiring teachers who have ESL and bilingual endorsements (Samway & McKeon, 2007).

In the state of Illinois, teacher preparation for working with ELLs is recognized with English as a second language (ESL) and bilingual

endorsements. These endorsements require teachers to complete six cours-
es, for a total of 18 credit hours (Illinois State Board of Education, 2016).
The ESL and bilingual endorsement courses prepare teachers with a knowl-
edge base and skills to meet ELLs' educational needs, as well as to work
with their families. An important aspect of these courses is to prepare teach-
ers to advocate for ELLs. Some of the information that can be helpful for
teachers in advocating for ELLs is an understanding of the history of bilin-
gual education (Brisk, 2006; Crawford, 2004) and laws and court cases
in support of ELL education (Wright, 2015). Such information provides
teachers with an understanding of the sociopolitical context of bilingual
education in the United States and teachers' roles in advocating for the
rights of ELLs in school settings. This capacity to advocate for ELLs is
important for all teachers, whether they work with ELLs in areas that are
urban or rural.

The debate about whether instruction should occur in English, or in
the home language and English, has been present throughout the history of
bilingual education in the U.S. (Brisk, 2006; Crawford, 2004). This debate
continues today and is reflected in a variety of bilingual and ESL program
models. Long term research (Collier & Thomas, 2009) has been instrumen-
tal in making a case for the benefits of instruction in the home language for
as long as possible. It is important to point out that, contrary to much of
U.S. popular opinion, instruction in the home language does not impede
ELLs' acquisition of English; instead, instruction in the home language
enables ELLs to learn academic content as they are learning English. Dual
language models, which promote bilingualism and bi-literacy have been
found to be the most effective bilingual education models in the U.S. and
advocating for these dual language programs in our schools and communi-
ties can provide all children, ELLs and native language English speakers
alike, with the opportunity to become bilingual and bi-literate (Collier &
Thomas, 2009).

The expertise of teachers serving ELLs is often underestimated. Many
educators believe that what is required for meeting ELLs' educational needs
is "just good teaching" (Harper & de Jong, 2005). However, teachers of

ELLs must ensure that their students are meeting the Common Core Standards. This requires that teachers support their ELLs in learning academic content as they are learning English. As teachers work with ELLs, it is essential for them to consider the language learning needs of their students. An approach to lesson planning that specifically targets the content and language learning needs of ELLs is the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2014). In programs where bilingualism and bi-literacy are the goals, such as dual language programs, bridging from one language to the other is an important element of learning (Beeman & Urow, 2013). Effective teachers of ELLs also recognize these students and their families as important linguistic and cultural resources and draw on families' "funds of knowledge" as they develop curriculum that builds on children's lives (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 2005). Such examples are just a few of the ways that the education of ELLs is distinct from the education of mainstream English speakers.

Finally, one of the single most important things all teachers can do is to support families in maintaining their home language (Fillmore, 1991). Fillmore's (1991) "No Cost Study" highlights how many young children are at risk of losing their home language as they enter U.S. schools and start speaking more English at home. This increase of English at home often equates with speaking less of their home language and the eventual loss of that language. When this occurs, parents and children may lose the ability to communicate in-depth in a common tongue. It is important for all teachers to speak with families about the risk of home language loss and to encourage and support families in raising their children bilingually.

Visibly integrating the languages and cultures of ELLs into the classroom is another important way to support families in maintaining their language and culture and to recognize the diversity of ELLs (Bezdicek & García, 2012). The integration of these two things in the classroom is also a means of providing all children with opportunities to learn about others. Some of the ways teachers can incorporate ELLs' language and culture in the classroom are by displaying home language labels in classroom centers, providing books in the languages of specific ELLs, and integrating children's

culture into the curriculum. Families can offer important language and cultural resources by creating language labels for the classroom (in the languages of ELLs) and assisting in choosing books which authentically represent their language and culture. They can also share cultural information for classroom topics of study. These are important elements of teacher preparation when working with ELLs. Child-centered Practice in Early Childhood

The field of early childhood is filled with ideas about how to support children's learning, including child-centered, creative, and engaging concepts (Vecchi, 2010). In addition, there are also other points of view that are adult-directed, prescribed, and driven by standards early childhood educators are required to follow. These two seemingly disparate ways of thinking often collide in any arena where children develop and learn. As a result, many teachers are torn as to which perspective to take. Federally-run, Head Start programs are grounded in the best practices of ECE in order to support children who come from low-income families, so that they will be ready for kindergarten. They follow certain guidelines to be compliant with federal regulations (Office of Head Start, 2016). Although Head Start programs throughout the country all come from the same place theoretically, early learning practices may vary, giving Head Start teachers room to take on different approaches. As a result, there can be Head Start programs that are more or less in tune with best practices in the field of early childhood education; many may not be aware of more current trends such as the Project Approach and Reggio Emilia philosophy.

The Education Coordinators at Children's Center I and Children's Center II programs in Decatur, Illinois, stress that their staff and teachers incorporate more creative and child-centered experiences in their classrooms. Because of the push toward kindergarten readiness, the Children's Center I teachers have often been "bogged down" with documenting progress and ensuring the children are successful on assessments. These teachers also record the children's progress regularly in an assessment system that gathers data. In spite of several years' worth of constraints, the Children's Center I and Children's Center II Education Coordinators are looking to

find ways to offer professional development to their staffs concerning the Project Approach and the Reggio Emilia philosophies. Therefore, we seized the opportunity to include Children's Center I and Children's Center II in our grant, and, as a result, we have been able to offer sessions in creativity and child-centered approaches in the past few months and continuing into fall 2016 to both centers' staff.

The Project Approach and Reggio philosophy are both child-centered ways of understanding how young children learn best. Teachers use observation and documentation in order to gather data on the interests of the children and use this information as foundations for providing authentic and meaningful learning experiences (Edwards, Gandini, & Forman, 2012; Helm & Katz, 2011; Katz & Chard, 2000). The interests of children are the guiding factors, and the teachers view children as leaders ("protagonists") of their own learning (Edwards et al., 2012), which may significantly differ from more traditional ways of learning that can be teacher-directed.

Often children who come from disadvantaged home environments are placed into learning situations less geared toward higher-order thinking skills (Dresden & Lee, 2007). This is a result of the need to have the children on task and as "ready" for kindergarten as their more advantaged peers. Basic skills become the focus; however, early childhood literature (e.g., Bredekamp & Copple, 2009; Katz & Chard, 2000) support another way of teaching, one that inspires creativity and higher-order thinking such as that used in the Project Approach.

The Project Approach has become more and more commonplace in the field of early childhood education over the past two decades and has empowered teachers and children to pursue investigations on topics of interest (Helm & Katz, 2011). In doing so, children learn as well as meet expected (and unexpected) goals and standards. In comparison, Project Approach work is not mutually exclusive to more traditional approaches; in fact, it is compatible with other types of teaching (Dresden & Lee, 2007).

Project Approach is rooted in several areas, one being Reggio Emilia, a philosophy of educating children, which began after WWII when parents wanted to create schools for their children in war-torn communities of

northern Italy. The Reggio philosophy has been inspired mostly by Loris Malaguzzi, who believed that children are the protagonists of their learning (Edwards et al., 2012). In schools that follow the Reggio Emilia philosophy, teachers provoke investigation and group learning by incorporating a variety of materials into the learning environment. Creativity and aesthetics, which are exemplified by emphasis on the arts, are at the core of the Reggio philosophy (Vecchi, 2010), while another critical component of the philosophy pertains to the physical environment and how it plays an important role in children's learning.

Within the Reggio philosophy, the environment is considered to be "the third teacher." This exists between the child, teacher, and parent (Strong-Wilson & Ellis, 2007). At Children's Center II, the Education Coordinator, a former Millikin ECE student, has gravitated toward the Reggio philosophy and its concepts. In her current position at Children's Center II, she expressed an interest in having her teachers learn about "The Third Teacher" and hence the importance of the physical environment in their classrooms. Our grant provided a gateway for her staff to explore and incorporate the Reggio philosophy into their classrooms, some of which were cluttered with teacher-made objects and signs.

Design and Implementation of Grant Project

Our grant work centered around supporting change in the education of English language learners and young children in central Illinois. The following sections show how we enacted our goals and handled the "bumps" along the road.

Cohort of Teachers for the ESL or Bilingual Endorsement

The recruitment of teachers interested in completing courses for the ESL or the bilingual endorsements was of primary importance in the first months of the grant. A flyer and informational letter were created for the possible enlistment of teachers. We also worked to schedule required courses in a new format (6 weeks, Thursday evenings, 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.), with the goal of making it less difficult for teachers to attend. Information (flyer, letter, and course schedule) was sent to our grant partners as

well as superintendents and principals within a 100-mile radius of Millikin University. This included 167 preschool, elementary, and middle schools in Abe Lincoln; 91 in Illini; and 38 in Corn Belt areas (i.e., three regions of the Illinois Principals Association). Interested individuals were asked if they had questions or were interested in joining the grant cohort. Benefits for those who wished to become part of the cohort included $3,000 in tuition dollars ($500/course) and the opportunity to complete the courses for the ESL or the bilingual endorsements within one year.

Ongoing emails are evidence of teacher interest in Decatur and the surrounding communities for completing the courses for the ESL or the bilingual endorsements. As communication about the grant cohort continued, numerous individuals showed a desire to join the ESL-bilingual endorsement cohort and went on to complete their online application for beginning courses at Millikin University. Some interested parties were unable to join the cohort. The challenges and/or complications potential participants shared included the time commitment in completing the courses plus the remaining cost. It soon became clear that even with the $3,000 in tuition offered to each teacher, many were still unable to bear the remaining $4,800 cost of the courses. However by January 2016, seven participants were recruited and registered as part of the grant. These individuals were professionals who worked for a variety of educational institutions such as Head Start and public school districts (preschool & elementary schools). Four participants were from Decatur and three from surrounding communities.

Two courses were offered during spring semester. These courses were Foundations of Bilingual Education and Child Language Development and Linguistics. Students' engagement was clearly in evidence by their careful reading of course materials, their comments and questions during class discussions, and their interest in sharing their own experiences with ELLs and families.

Because our goal was to recruit ten students for the grant cohort, our biggest challenge was the fluctuation in the number of cohort students. During this first semester, two students dropped out and two more joined.

The two who dropped were from the same school district in a local community. They had learned their school district would not move them up on the pay scale upon completion of the six courses because the courses at Millikin were not at the master's level. They were concerned about the time and money that they would be investing as well as the additional responsibilities that would fall to them in serving ELLs, without additional compensation. Later, another recruit also asked to be dropped from the courses. She was offered a new job and felt she would not have time for our grant program. Additionally, she stated concern about the cost of the courses at this time in her life since she was interested in completing a degree in early childhood education.

As of June 2016 we have six students in the grant cohort, five from Decatur and one from Urbana, Illinois. Of the five students from Decatur, three work for a local public school district and two for Head Start. The sixth student works for a public school district in a surrounding community. These students represent a variety of educational backgrounds. Two have degrees in elementary education, two graduated in early childhood education, and two possess transitional bilingual education certificates (which grant them five years to complete the required courses to become certified bilingual educators). All of the individuals in the grant cohort work with young children, birth through age 8, in educational settings.

The six students of this cohort continue to build a strong knowledge base for working with ELLs and are clearly becoming advocates for ELLs and their families. This is probably our biggest success. We have no doubt that students in this cohort will impact change in their local communities. Three are completing courses for the bilingual endorsement, and three are completing courses for the ESL endorsement. Other students are welcome to join these classes regardless of whether they are interested in completing one of the endorsements or not. Overall, our goal is to support educators in Decatur and the surrounding communities in learning more about working with ELLs.

Supporting the Professional Development of our Grant Partners Serving ELLs

As part of our grant work, we are also providing professional development to educational institutions in the Decatur area that serve ELLs. For this aspect, our grant partners are Mound School, Penner Early Learning Center, and the Alice George Early Childhood Education Center. Both Mound School and Penner Early Learning Center are designated schools in a local public school district. The Alice George Early Childhood Education Center is located on the campus of Richland Community College. In addition to benefitting from professional development, each institution also received funding for the purchase of materials to serve their ELL populations.

Mound School serves a growing population of Decatur community ELLs. At the present time, 102 ELLs attend Mound School, representing 12 different languages, the largest of these being Spanish and Arabic, with 52 Spanish speakers and 25 Arabic speakers. Our goal is to support Mound School in their work with ELLs in whatever way we can. The principal and ESL/bilingual staff have requested our assistance in establishing a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). Such a group is outlined in the Illinois Administrative Code – Part 228, which delineates requirements for districts serving ELLs (preK–grade 12). For example, parents, guardians, and staff were recruited to attend the Annual Statewide Summit for Bilingual Parents, an event sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education – Division of English Language Learning. District funds supported this attendance. The principal of Mound School reported that experience was positive. Our partnership will continue to assist and support the role of this parent group as the new academic year begins in fall 2016.

Another school, Penner Early Learning Center, supports preschool ELLs (ages 3 to 5 years) and their families. Penner Early Learning Center serves 34 children who qualify as ELLs, representing seven different languages. When we met with the principal and the ESL teacher at Penner Early Learning Center, they requested professional development for staff; voicing their concern that staff, including teachers and assistants overall, relied

on the ESL teacher to meet the needs of ELLs who qualified for services. The Penner Early Learning Center principal and ESL teacher wanted all school staff to learn more about the home language survey (a form required by the Illinois State Board of Education that families complete indicating language use in the home), how children qualify as ELLs, program models for serving preschool ELLs, and information about what all teachers should be doing to support young ELLs. That is, everyone needs to take a role in the education of ELLs. We presented professional development sessions at Penner Early Learning Center and a satellite center. Participants at these sessions showed interest in ways to support learning for preschool ELLs and their families. It is important to note that after these professional development sessions, one of the preschool classroom assistants shared her interest in learning more about serving ELLs and joined our grant cohort.

Another early learning facility, the Alice George Early Childhood Education Center located on the campus of Richland Community College, was also involved in professional development sessions to learn more about supporting ELLs and their families. This center provides preschool instruction to children, ages 2 to 5 years. It also serves school-age children after 3 p.m. and during the summer. At the present time, nine children who attend the center come from families representing six different Indian languages. Discussion with the center director illuminated the need for professional development in working with linguistically and culturally diverse families such as these. In response, professional development was provided to the staff in spring 2016. This session emphasized ways in which program staff can integrate home language and culture for the emerging bilingual children whom they serve at the Alice George Early Childhood Education Center. The staff will be drawing from this professional development opportunity to purchase linguistically and culturally diverse materials for the center with grant monies. An emphasis will be on culturally relevant books in the children's Indian languages and in English.

Professional Development for Head Start and Early Head Start

In November 2015, we met with the Education Coordinators of two Head Start organizations in the Decatur community. As discussed previously in this chapter, Children's Center I serves families and their children [over 300] who are of preschool age (3- & 4-year-olds); Children's Center II provides support to infants/toddlers (0 to 3 years) and their families. First, we discussed strategies for delivering professional development to the teachers of these two programs; we then explored topics that were relevant to each group's specific needs. Finally, we looked at tentative timelines for professional development sessions for each program's staff and teachers.

Two major forces motivated the participants at these settings: ExceleRate Illinois, a program evaluation and improvement system in which ECE providers/educators advance in their knowledge and expertise to reach the highest level and Gold Circle (Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, n.d.). Another motivating factor is Race to the Top, which is a push toward excellence in preparing young children for kindergarten (Robert R. McCormick Foundation, n.d.). Both of these programs contribute to the Decatur Head Start staff's desire to be the best in what they do with children and families; however, each Head Start program has somewhat different needs for professional development.

Again, as covered above, at Children's Center I, the Education Coordinator is most concerned with supporting teachers' creativity and using more child-centered strategies, both part of the Project Approach (Helm & Katz, 2011; Katz & Chard, 2000) and the Reggio Emilia philosophy (Edwards et al., 2012). We discussed strategies for reaching those teachers and their assistants who were less willing to change, mostly centering around being out of their comfort zone in giving the children more control of their learning experiences. Throughout these sessions, such teachers were still somewhat reluctant to try new things and yet concerned with meeting their goals. We had interesting discussions about what works, what's "always" worked, and what the children are gleaning from these varied approaches (i.e., child- or adult-centered).

At Children's Center II, teachers were farther along in their level of creativity and awareness of child-centered experiences. In the beginning planning sessions, their education coordinator talked about possible topics. The first session at Children's Center II was a short presentation/workshop on family-community engagement. The next session centered on physical environment, part of the Reggio approach (i.e., The Third Teacher). One particular classroom was the focus because the physical space was cluttered, with too much on the walls and in the room. Teachers' comments about being "anxious" were often made with regard to how it felt inside that classroom. We each agreed that physical space would be a topic with potential for this staff's growth and awareness. Such a topic was a logical next step because recently Children's Center II had gone through a major renovation of their outdoor environment, with many families, teachers, and community members creating an extraordinary outdoor learning space composed of hands-on, natural materials for the babies and toddlers to use as they explore the outdoors. This sort of space is compatible with the Reggio philosophy, that is, interactive, aesthetically-pleasing, and in a natural setting (Deviney, Duncan, Harris, Rody, & Rosenberry, 2010). Children's Center II's staff and families are very proud of this outdoor space, which became a natural segue to examining ways to re-work indoor space.

Interestingly, Children's Center II had received the Gold Circle of Quality, the highest designation, from ExceleRate IL (Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, n.d.) which was the backdrop for sessions on physical environment. As a result, the teachers revealed they were less open to new ideas. As we first looked at photos of traditional and non-traditional spaces and discussed principles of The Third Teacher, several Children's Center II teachers challenged what was presented. When we visited the problematic classroom, and even after discussing how the teachers felt in this room and what things might be modified within the space to make them feel more comfortable, some of the teachers were unable to see the need for change. Thus, all teachers were given the opportunity to voice their opinions amongst themselves, to brainstorm ideas, and to continue this focus in fall 2016.

Articulation Work with 2-Year Institutions

The third area of our grant involved our articulation work with 2-year institutions, Richland Community College (Decatur, Illinois) and Lincoln Land Community College (Springfield, Illinois). (Millikin University has articulation agreements with both institutions; however, these have not been updated since 2013.) Our meetings at Richland occurred typically twice a month throughout the semester, while meetings at Lincoln Land occurred three times during the semester. The goal of this articulation work, overall, was to support an effective and smooth transition for students who transfer from 2-year institutions, such as Richland and Lincoln Land Community Colleges, to a 4-year institution, in this case, Millikin University.

As we worked to update articulation agreements, some of our discussions involved suggestions for improving specific courses. We decided to focus on courses that were similar in content; the Richland faculty proposed several courses that met these criteria (e.g., Child Development). Most of the courses were geared toward sophomores (i.e., 200 level) and centered around changes that needed to be made. The next step was to examine various syllabi, for these similar courses, in order to see if there were any gaps in the requirements.

The process of looking more closely at courses sometimes was difficult regarding treading on each other's "turf." In general, faculty in higher education tend to "own" courses, and when others enter the arena to make changes in such courses, resistance can occur. We were all sensitive to these possible reactions, and because of good relationships, we honored and respected each other's expertise. As a result, we made much progress toward meeting our articulation goals.

As an example, an early childhood professor at Richland took the lead in addressing needed changes of a child development course. First, we suggested that students complete a child case study as an assignment for the course. As our discussion continued, the professor and her colleagues shared concerns about the course overall. Because it was offered to their early childhood education students by another department (psychology),

they were concerned that it did not meet the needs of their students. The staff at Richland decided it would be more effective to develop a new child development course, one that would be taught within their department and thus more effectively serve the ECE students. As a result of these efforts, this new course at Richland is going through the college levels of approval. We are anticipating this course will be offered at Richland as soon as the spring semester of 2017.

The Millikin University faculty on this grant also recommended changes for other Richland courses, involving assignments that would support students in gaining a deeper understanding of particular course content. Thus, Richland students will actually experience the phases of the Project Approach (Katz & Chard, 2000) as an element of their class. Additionally, the use of professional resources (readings, films, etc.) for specific courses, with the goal of introducing students at Richland and Lincoln Land to relevant information for working with ELLs, was suggested. Examples of these recommendations include two readings from the Illinois State Board of Education website for Richland's ECE 210 and Lincoln Land's ECE 105. These readings are *PreK-3rd: Challenging Common Myths about Dual Language Learners* (Espinosa, 2013) and *Good Intentions, Bad Advice for Bilingual Families* (Paneque, 2006). Another proposal was for both Richland and Lincoln Land to incorporate the film *Babies* (Balmès, 2010) in their child development courses (Richland's new course, ECE 215, and Lincoln Land's ECE 122). These ideas for supplemental materials were presented merely as plans for improving these courses; all were well received.

The examples above demonstrate how relationships with our early childhood colleagues was one of the most important aspects of our articulation work. We shared course syllabi, resources, and assignments, and kept the door open for discussion of difficult decisions such as needing to include a case study in Richland's Child Development course in order for the course to meet the same rigorous requirements as that of a similar course at a 4-year institution. We believe that in the future our articulation work will continue in this vein.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There are many things to learn from this grant work, both within bilingual-ESL for preschool and elementary school children as well as for teachers in early childhood education. Our work in these areas benefits all of us, Millikin University, Richland Community College, and Lincoln Land Community College. We all have a vested interest in ensuring that credits transfer and students complete their 4-year degrees in early childhood education. Ultimately, we all want to increase the number of early childhood teachers in central Illinois.

In the field of ECE, opportunities such as workshops and classes are endless for expanding teachers' awareness of aesthetics and becoming more creative and child-centered in their approaches. The key to success in providing these professional development sessions is obtaining teachers' "buy in," and honoring teachers for where they are, what they know, and what they want to learn. Although there may be issues that continue to "cloud the waters," such as standards and evaluations, professional development for teachers in the Decatur Head Start programs has been hopeful: our grant partners have wonderful education coordinators and administrators, who are open to continuing professional development with our group. In the field of bilingual-ESL education, more obstacles exist.

The shortage of teachers serving the growing population of ELLs in schools in the U.S., and especially in our state, continues to be a thought-provoking issue (Samway & McKeon, 2007). Our work points to realistic challenges such as increasing the number of teachers with ESL/bilingual endorsements in Decatur and the surrounding communities. Although we found there is teacher interest in completing courses for these endorsements, there appears to be little support or incentive for them to do so. Writing the proposal for this grant was our attempt to help local teachers, but early on in the process of enacting the grant, it became clear to us that more support was needed than the $3,000 per individual awarded to each student as part of the funding. Realistically, we should not be surprised by this. Many students or would-be students may be paying off debts (vehicle loan, home mortgage, school loans, etc.). Thus, the expense for the ESL/

bilingual endorsement is not something they may wish to add. As a result, we believe that it is important for administrators and school districts to consider other options.

It seems appropriate to us that school districts support their teachers financially in completing courses for the ESL/bilingual endorsement. We recommend district "buy in" in this regard and that said districts should bear at least a portion of the cost for teachers to pursue the ESL/bilingual endorsements. For example, some area districts pay tuition for their ELLs to attend Mound School in Decatur. They do this because they do not have teachers with the ESL or bilingual endorsements in their own district. None of these districts sent teachers to us with the goal of supporting their teachers in completing courses for these endorsements. In our minds, this completion and earning of additional endorsements would be a more effective investment of time and money, in the long run perhaps saving these districts money. Our work has shown us that we need to be a voice for change. We plan to speak with area administrators and district central office personnel to encourage them to financially support teachers in the completion of courses needed for the ESL/bilingual endorsements. In this way, districts can "grow their own" and work toward providing the needed ESL and bilingual teachers for the populations they serve.

Finally, at the very least, we believe it is essential that school districts recognize the expertise that teachers with the ESL and bilingual endorsements bring to their students. Unfortunately, there may still be administrators and teachers who believe the education of ELLs is "just good teaching" (Harper & de Jong, 2005). Until more educators understand how teachers with the ESL or the bilingual endorsement can provide needed specialized support for ELLs, challenges in meeting the educational needs of such students in our schools will continue to be an ongoing area of concern in the Decatur community and surrounding areas. As we continue to work with teachers, administrators, and district personnel, we plan to raise awareness of the importance of the ESL and bilingual endorsements for meeting the educational needs of ELLs in central Illinois.

References

Balmès, T. (Director). (2010). *Babies* [Motion picture]. United States: Focus Features.

Beeman, K., & Urow, C. (2013). *Teaching for biliteracy: Strengthening bridges between languages*. Philadelphia, PA: Caslon Publishing.

Bezdicek, J., & García, E. G. (2012). Working with preschool English language learners: A sociocultural approach. In B. Yoon & H. K. Kim (Eds.), *Teachers' roles in second language learning: Classroom applications of sociocultural theory* (pp. 171–188). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Bredecamp, S., & Copple, C. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Brisk, M. E. (2006). *Bilingual education: From compensatory to quality schooling*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Collier, V. P., & Thomas, W. P. (2009). *Educating English learners for a transformed world*. Albuquerque, NM: Fuente Press.

Crawford, J. (2004). *English language learners: Language diversity in the classroom*. Los Angeles: CA: Bilingual Educational Services, Inc.

Deviney, J., Duncan, S., Harris, S., Rody, M., & Rosenberry, L. (2010). *Inspiring spaces for young children*. Silver Spring, MD: Gryphon House.

Dresden, J., & Lee, K. (2007). *The effects of project work in a first-grade classroom: A little goes a long way*. ERCP, 9(1). Retrieved from http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v9n1/dresden.html

Echevarría, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2014). *Making content comprehensible for elementary English learners: The SIOP model*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L., & Forman, G. (Eds.). (2012). *The hundred languages of children: The Reggio Emilia experience in transformation*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Espinosa, L. M. (2013). *PreK-3rd: Challenging common myths about dual language learners* (PreK- 3rd Policy to Action Brief #10). New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development. Retrieved from http://fcdus.org/sites/default/files/Challenging%20 Common%20Myths%20Update.pdf

Fillmore, L. W. (1991). When learning a second language means losing the first. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 6*(3), 323–346.

Harper, C., & de Jong, E. (2005). Working with English language learners: What's the difference? In A. Huerta-Macias (Ed.), *Working with English language learners: Perspectives and practice* (pp. 107–135). Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

Helm, J., & Katz, L. (2011). *Young investigators: The project approach in the early years* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Illinois State Board of Education. (2016). *Illinois licensure, endorsement, and approval requirements*. Retrieved from http://www.isbe.net/licensure/requirements/endsmt_struct.pdf

Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. (n.d.) *What is ExceleRate Illinois?* Retrieved from http://www.excelerateillinois.com/about/what-is-excelerate-illinois

Katz, L., & Chard, S. (2000). *Engaging children's minds: The project approach* (2nd ed.). Stamford, CT: Ablex.

Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N. (2005). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. In N. González, L. D. Moll, & C. Amanti (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms* (pp. 71–87). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *English language learners in public schools*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgf.asp

Office of Head Start. (2016). *Head Start programs*. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohs/about/head-start

Paneque, O. M. (2006). Good intentions, bad advice for bilingual families. *Childhood Education, 82*(3), 171. Retrieved from http://www.isbe.state.il.us/earlychi/preschool/preschool_ell.htm

Robert R. McCormick Foundation. (n.d.) *Early learning in Illinois and the Race to the Top*. Retrieved from http://www.mccormickfoundation.org/page.aspx?pid=961

Samway, K. D., & McKeon, D. (2007). *Myths and realities: Best practices for English language learners* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Strong-Wilson, T., & Ellis, J. (2007). Children and place: Reggio Emilia's environment as third teacher. *Theory into Practice, 46*(1), 40–47.

Vecchi, V. (2010). *Art and creativity in Reggio Emilia*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Wright, W. E. (2015). *Landmark court rulings regarding English language learners*. Retrieved from http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/landmark-court-rulings-regarding-english-language-learners

Partnership Description

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) and City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) partnership is between the UIC College of Education (COE), Harold Washington College and Harry S. Truman College, two of the seven independently accredited colleges that comprise the CCC system. UIC is an urban, land-grant Research I University focused on advancing scholarship through research, teaching, and service, in partnership with the Chicago community. UIC serves 28,000 students representing one of the most diverse student bodies in the United States. The UIC COE strives to prepare the next generation of educators, educational leaders, and educational researchers to establish equity in Chicago communities and schools.

CCC is one of the nation's largest community college systems and the largest in Illinois. Almost six thousand faculty and staff help prepare more than 120,000 students each year to enter the workforce, pursue higher education, and advance their careers. Harold Washington College is centrally located in downtown Chicago and serves students from across the city. It was the first City College to earn national accreditation for its Early Childhood programs.

Harry S. Truman College is a vibrant and vital part of Chicago's Uptown neighborhood, delivering high-quality, innovative, affordable, and accessible educational opportunities and services.

For More About the Partner Institutions:

City Colleges of Chicago: http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Pages/Facts-Statistics.aspx

Harry S. Truman College: http://www.ccc.edu/colleges/truman/menu/Pages/About-the-College.aspx

University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Education: http://education.uic.edu/about-us/about-us#mission-values--history

CHAPTER 14

Refine, Refocus, and Renew: Early Childhood Preparation Pathways in Chicago

Catherine Main, Jennifer G. Asimow, and Kate Connor

Key Words: academic advising, articulation, credentials, diversity, early childhood special education, early childhood workforce pathways, ESL/bilingual endorsement, master's degree, partnerships, strengths-based approach, teacher licensure, transfer

Overview: A Partnership; Years in the Making

Ten years ago in 2006, the Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children (CMAEYC) hosted a brown bag lunch where early childhood practitioners were invited to bring their transcripts for review by local 4-year institutions. The intended purpose was to make recommendations and suggestions to early childhood directors, teachers, and teacher assistants about options and next steps towards earning an Illinois teaching certificate in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Several representatives from 4-year institutions attended, including the program coordinator of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) early childhood program and co-author of this chapter.

The line of people attending the session wrapped through the small room and extended down the hall. The interest in and demand for information among the early childhood workforce about increasing education and earning meaningful credentials, degrees, and Illinois certification was acutely evident. What was much less evident, however, was exactly how to provide support, particularly viable pathways for course transfer and

program completion. The transcripts reviewed were extremely varied ranging from degrees in non-related fields to compilations of multiple ECE classes, sometimes the same course, taken at different institutions. Some transcripts also revealed completed bachelor degrees from other countries. It seemed that not only were institutions of higher education (IHEs) not connecting to one another for transfer and articulation, but also that the systems for credentialing and certification were not well aligned. This scenario was not unique to Illinois. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) highlighted similar challenges in their Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems titled *Workforce Designs* (LeMoine, 2008). Specifically, they reported that many staff in early childhood programs were participating in professional development workshops and courses that often did not lead to a credential or a degree, that clear pathways across sectors and functions were not widely available, and that there was very limited articulation between associate degree and baccalaureate degree programs or credit-bearing community-based training and education opportunities (LeMoine, 2008). Our experiences with the system and institutional failures were deeply personal; we were working directly with and trying to support early childhood educators struggling to increase their education and earn needed credentials. It was the start of years of conversation and work directed toward building coherent pathways for the Chicago-area early childhood workforce in order to respond to both the varied demands for qualified early childhood professionals and educational attainment and experience of the existing workforce.

Background and Significance

The formation of the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) and UIC partnership for pathways for Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) was based heavily on two major premises. First, we understood that unlike K-12 education, early childhood education takes many different forms, occurs in a variety of settings, and has multiple funding streams with varying requirements. Given the comprehensive needs, range of settings, varying requirements,

and various roles (e.g., teacher assistants, lead teachers, center directors, family specialists, etc.), the preparation of the early childhood workforce is complex and multifaceted. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) acknowledged this complexity in preparing ECEs in a 2004 report where they described the delivery of early childhood preparation as "a miscellany of institutions" resulting in fragmentation across all sectors. The partnerships between UIC and CCC focused on understanding the complex context and tasked ourselves with developing coherent and cohesive pathways that offered options, as well as entry and exit ramps, across different roles, sectors, programs, and funding streams. Specifically, we felt we could reduce the fragmentation of programs if we framed our work as strengthening preparation for work across all sectors and communities that serve young children and families rather than the narrow definition of classrooms in public schools only. As a result, our work not only considered Early Childhood Care and Education curriculum and its' alignment to Illinois Network of Childcare Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) Gateways ECE Credentials, but also added a Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) curriculum, which aligned to the INCCRRA Gateways Family Specialist Credential.

The second major premise guiding our work was our belief that across the Chicago community we already had an experienced, culturally and linguistically diverse workforce. This belief was based on our combined fifty plus years of working directly in early childhood programs throughout Chicago and surrounding communities and also on the following data about the Illinois early childhood workforce. For example, data from the Illinois Gateways Registry which includes information on the Illinois early childhood workforce in licensed settings, showed that the "City of Chicago" teaching staff in 2015 was 41% African-American, 29% Latino/Hispanic, and 21% Caucasian (Whitehead, 2016). We viewed this diversity as strength, and it served as a foundation for our program development.

It is well documented that children benefit from teachers who practice culturally-sensitive pedagogy (Delpit, 1995; Hawley & Neito, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll & González, 2004). Teaching staff, of and

from the communities they serve, bring critical first-hand knowledge about the community into the classroom and are better able to draw on community resources. Educator similarities in background, language, and other forms of cultural expression not only support children's social and emotional development but can also have positive effects on children's experiences in school (Dee, 2004). The rich cultural and linguistic diversity of our workforce, however, is mostly and increasingly overrepresented in support roles (e.g., teacher's aides and assistants) and underrepresented in more senior roles (e.g., lead and master teachers) in the current workforce (Ray, Bowman, & Bobbins, 2006). It was our goal to develop pathways and opportunities that would reverse this trend by creating program models and pathways for teaching staff in supportive roles (for example, teacher assistants) and those working in community child care centers to move into leadership roles.

Previous program work in the UIC Early Childhood alternative certification program provided some guiding principles for pathway and program design that were sensitive to recruiting, retaining, and matriculating non-traditional students from racial and ethnic minorities. Through the program, nearly 100 teachers working in community-based child care centers in Chicago's most underserved neighborhoods earned Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Early Childhood, type 04, teaching certificates (now called Professional Educator Licenses). More than three-quarters of teachers completing the program were from racial and ethnic minority groups (University of Illinois at Chicago, 2014).

The ECE workforce is often described as lacking sufficient academic preparation for the rigor of college-level coursework, missing the material and social resources necessary to support their academic pursuits, and having low literacy skills and levels of English proficiency (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2008). Teaching staff may be reminded of their deficits through communications sent to them from state licensing and credential agencies, for example. With this in mind, the UIC ECE alternative certification program was specifically designed to focus on strengths (e.g., cultural competency, community awareness, life experience) and develop systems

and structures that mediate "deficiencies," such as those described previously. Students were admitted to this UIC program based on demonstrated past and continued commitment to working with young children and their families, cultural competencies (e.g., of and from particular communities and bilingualism), and years of experience, rather than traditional requirements such as grade point averages and test scores. This type of diversity and commitment is fertile ground for creating a high-quality workforce (Nitecki, 2012). A follow-up survey was emailed to students who participated in the UIC ECE alternative certification program. Through Google forms, program participants anonymously answered a range of questions concerning their experience in the program and post-program. The return rate on the survey was more than 50%. The survey data demonstrated that students completing the UIC alternative certification not only remained in the field teaching young children, but half went on to earn an additional endorsement in English as a Second Language (ESL), and nearly one third earned Masters' degrees in early childhood/early childhood special education from UIC (University of Illinois at Chicago, 2014).

Design and Implementation of the Grant Project

Our commitment, to developing new coherent pathways for the early childhood workforce, was based on our previous experiences in program development, recruitment, and student support. We grounded our work on the dual premises that (1) we needed multiple paths for different roles and sectors, and (2) we wanted to build a strengths-based model that acknowledged the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of the workforce and commitment to young children and their families.

Describing the "Process"

In this section we describe our process. In 2001, we began thinking about a partnership that addressed the seemingly simple question, "Why shouldn't students in the city of Chicago who attend their local public community college have an option to matriculate to their local public university?" Programs at the City Colleges of Chicago had hundreds of students taking child development and early childhood education

coursework, interested in furthering their education, and earning work-related credentials and degrees, yet there seemed to be few viable options for them at 4-year institutions. Many of the Bachelor of Arts (BA) programs focused on Illinois state teaching licenses (formerly known as a Type 04 certification) leaving little room for students who were not interested in becoming public school teachers but who wanted to further their education. Additionally, BA programs with Illinois state teacher licensure may have additional barriers for matriculation from CCC programs, specifically the minimum scores on the Illinois Test of Academic Proficiency (ITAP) and/or ACT/SAT. Public data from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has continued to show that minority test takers, particularly African-American and Latino, have lower pass rates in comparison to white test takers. For example, cumulative pass rates on ITAP for African-Americans and Hispanics across four reporting quarters in 2015 ranged from 11–16% and 10–8%, respectively, compared to pass rates of white test takers that ranged from 35–39% during the same time period (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.).

Investigating the "Issues"

Our simple question had exposed a range of issues not just related to CCC and UIC, but to challenges across the entire system of ECE teacher preparation in Illinois. With funding from the Chicago Community Trust, (a community foundation dedicated to grant making, civic engagement, and philanthropy) we formed a work group to identify the challenges of and make recommendations for ECE teacher preparation in Illinois. The work-group produced a report, *Appraising Early Childhood Teacher Preparation in Illinois* (AECTP-I; Nelson, Main, & Kushto-Hoban, 2012) and proffered the following key recommendations for institutions of higher education with ECE teacher preparation programs and supporting organizations:

1. Provide *multiple entry* (e.g., pre-service and in-service) and exit (e.g., Child Development Associate (CDA), associate and bachelor degrees, Illinois Gateways child credentials, Illinois licensure) points;

2. Provide *flexibility* to attract high-quality students and support high-need students; and

3. Build *capacity* (increased programming) to prepare teachers to work with children across the birth to 8 age range (Nelson et al., 2012).

The organizing principle for the recommendations was strengthening partnerships across institutions of higher education and other entities involved in Illinois ECE teacher preparation. The partnership principle was also the foundation of the Early Childhood Educator Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grants. Developing professional relationships and opportunities to meet on a regular basis across institutions are crucial steps in improving transfer and articulation efforts (Cassidy, 2015). The EPPI grant provided our partnership with structure and associated funding, thus strengthening said partnership. The grant also moved our partnership from a discussion phase among ourselves into development and implementation phases that included additional stakeholders (e.g., administrators, deans, and other faculty) at our respective institutions.

Developing the "Pathways"

The next step in the process was pathway development. Building the actual pathway became a delicate balancing act between what was already in place at our institutions and in the larger Illinois system for early childhood professional development, such as Child Development Associate (CDA) credential programs, the Illinois Gateways Credential system, and the Illinois Professional Educator Licensing system (PEL). Existing degrees at our respective institutions included the Child Development Associate (CDA), Associate of Applied Science (AAS), and Associate of Arts (AA) degrees in Child Development at Harold Washington College (HWC); AA and AAS degrees in Child Development and in Human Development and Family Studies at Harry S. Truman College (Truman); and a Master of Education (MEd) degree in Early Childhood Education with an option to earn an Illinois Professional Educator License (PEL) with endorsements in ECE, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), and English as a Second

Language (ESL) at UIC. The idea of both entry and exit ramps was crucial to our design. Building from our premise that the Illinois early childhood workforce requires different roles with varying levels of educational attainment, given the venue, we wanted opportunities for students to enter and exit at different points with some type of credential and/or degree.

We intentionally began our pathway at the CDA level. While we knew research on the efficacy of CDA programs was mixed (Cho, 2015), we were convinced that the CDA was both a viable entry and also an exit point for the Chicago-area workforce. In fact, a pathway at HWC from CDA to degree already existed. The Chicago Department of Family and Social Services (DFSS) sponsors a credit-bearing CDA program that is housed at HWC, which puts students on a path towards additional credit hours and opportunities for completion (exit) with certificates, credentials, and degrees. Those who work toward a CDA credential are often advised to continue on towards higher certificates, including a basic, an advanced, and ultimately an associate degree. Students who begin in that program can follow incremental steps in the ECE profession toward increased credit hours, job opportunities, and salaries.

What we were missing was a link from the CCC to UIC. Years earlier, two of the authors of this chapter developed a structure for linking CCC to UIC called Early Learning in Illinois: Networks, Connections, and Structures or ELINCS. It was designed specifically to remove or attenuate key barriers in recruiting, retaining, and successfully matriculating high-need ECE students through both an associate and a bachelor degree program. ELINCS was focused most centrally on creating and sustaining a network of supports for students, including intensive mentoring and counseling services and innovations in instructional delivery that responded to students' lifestyle needs; i.e., classes that accommodated students who worked full time, had families of their own, and may have been out of formal schooling for many years. Additionally, ELINCS planned to directly address barriers stemming from problems with articulation and transfer through developing associate and bachelor degree programs conjointly with one another. Funding for ELINCS was never secured, but the concept remained with us

and became the underlying framework for our EPPI grant work; the UIC College of Education did eventually develop a BA program that would link to CCC.

In 2013, the UIC Department of Educational Psychology in the College of Education established an undergraduate degree program in Human Development and Learning (HDL) to prepare individuals to work within a variety of educational learning contexts and settings or for professional or graduate work within a number of disciplines, including Early Childhood. The overarching foundation of the BA in HDL at UIC is a Liberal Arts education that prepares graduates to think critically, communicate well, organize and analyze information, solve problems, and collaborate with a diverse array of individuals. Within this overarching foundation, the BA degree in HDL aims to provide students with strong grounding in research and theory concerning learning and development across the candidate's lifespan, as well as how to apply this knowledge to working with diverse individuals in a variety of formal (e.g., schools) and informal learning contexts and educational environments (e.g., after-school and community-based programs).

The development of the BA degree in HDL at UIC not only provided the needed link between our institutions, but also offered another space on the pathway with additional entry and exit ramps for the entire EC workforce. For instance, the BA degree in HDL is a non-licensure program that provides multiple entry points. Students can apply directly to the HDL program as freshman or as transfer students from another program, including CCC. Point of fact: UIC is one of Illinois top destinations for transfer students (UIC, Transfer Assistance Center, n.d.). Over 2,000 students transfer to UIC each academic year and nearly 40% of UIC's undergraduate student population entered UIC as new transfer students (UIC, Transfer Assistance Center, n.d.). Because the structure and commitment to transfer students already existed at UIC, our next task was connecting coursework completed by students in Child Development and Family Studies programs at CCC to the newly developed BA in HDL and ultimately the UIC MEd degree and Illinois state licensure program in Early Childhood Education.

We used the Illinois Gateways credentialing system as foundation for connection and shared language. The CCC programs aligned with Illinois Gateways Level 4 Early Childhood Education Credential and the UIC BA and MEd programs aligned with Level 5 ECE credentials. Therefore, each of us aligned our respective programs with the Illinois Gateways Credential system. We identified a 30-credit course sequence within the UIC HDL program that provided pathways for students to transfer into ECE coursework from CCC or complete all required ECE coursework within the UIC HDL program. (The required coursework in the ECE sequence in the BA in HDL also provides a pathway toward a 4-semester MEd degree and PEL with endorsements in ECE, ECSE, and ESL at UIC.) In short, we constructed pathways for students to move from entry level at CCC to Masters' level at UIC with multiple options along the way to enter and exit.

Critical to linking CCC coursework to UIC is the transfer policy. When the work began, our original goal was the development of traditional, formal articulation agreements between CCC and UIC. Our thinking was centered on individual course-to-course articulation between the institutions. Fully aware of the challenges related to direct course to course transfer, we began investigating more flexible transfer options, particularly those that allowed for course to program transfer rather than only course to course. Instead of focusing on how one course articulates with another course, we looked for ways transfer courses could meet program requirements. For instance, at UIC, course to program transfer is accomplished by creating "pseudo" courses. "Pseudo" courses allow completed transfer credit to apply toward selected degree requirements when direct course-to-course articulations are not possible. For example, the UIC HDL program has a "pseudo" course entitled "Diverse Populations" which aligns with the HDL program requirement that students take six credits focused on psycho-social development, learning, and health and/or well-being of diverse individuals/ and/or families and/or that focuses on the ways that issues such as race, class, gender, etc., affect learning and development. Both HWC and Truman offer a range of courses, including the *Exceptional Child* and *Family Development from Cross Cultural Perspectives* that meet

the UIC HDL program requirement for Diverse Populations. Students can transfer such courses into UIC even though we do not have corresponding or matching courses typically required for course-to-course transfer. The development and use of "pseudo" courses reflects a more student-centered approach to transfer and assessment of student knowledge. For us, it represents less about "do you have this particular course?" and more about "do you have this particular competency?"

Communication and Recruitment

Communicating these pathway options to students was the next step in our process. We met with stakeholders at both CCC and UIC to learn more about how the advising structures, marketing campaigns, and other existing transfer programs worked. Later, we worked with a graphic design team who brought the partnership to life visually. We created a multi-page brochure that outlined the structure of our partnership, provided details about the program, and made contact information available so potential students could interact directly with a faculty member or advisor (see Figure 1). Additionally, we wanted to personalize and advertise the pathways by introducing this concept to CCC students face-to-face. We created presentations designed specifically for CCC students. For two semesters, faculty and advisors from UIC came to HWC to present information about the BA in HDL directly to current students in the Child Development program. The presentations focused on the flexibility of programming, the personalized advising components, and the multiple support systems available at UIC.

Advising

Building the system with multiple entry and exit ramps for various career pathways in early childhood and developing communication and recruitment plans is only half of our design process. We know retention and success of our students will be dependent upon our advising systems. In general, the National Academic Advising Association suggests that effective academic advising "synthesizes and contextualizes students' educational

Get on the path
to success as an early childhood professional

Gain the knowledge, skills and credentials you need to take advantage of expanding early childhood opportunities such as these:

Chart is for illustrative purposes only; actual job requirements may vary.

Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential
City Colleges of Chicago

- Head Start teacher assistant
- Early Head Start teacher assistant

Associate in Applied Science Degree (A.A.S.) in Child Development or Human Development and Families Studies or Associate in Arts Degree (A.A.)
Illinois Gateways Level IV ECE Credential
Level IV Infant Toddler Credential
Level 1 Illinois Director's Credential
City Colleges of Chicago

- Child care center infant toddler or preschool teacher
- Child care center director
- Family child care provider
- Public school paraprofessional
- Home visitor
- Child and family services worker
- Level 4 family specialist credential

Continue your education to expand your opportunities and increase your earning power:

Bachelor's Degree (B.A.) in Human Development and Learning
Illinois Gateways Level V ECE Credential
Level 2 Illinois Director's Credential
College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago

- Head Start teacher
- Head Start director or administrator
- Family resource teacher
- Early childhood curriculum coordinator

Master's Degree (M.Ed) in Early Childhood Education
Illinois Gateways Level V ECE Credential
Illinois Gateways Level 3 Illinois Director's Credential
Illinois Professional Educator License (PEL) with Endorsements in ECE, ECSE and ESL
College of Education, University of Illinois at Chicago

- Public school preschool teacher
- Public school primary grade teacher
- Early childhood policy or program developer
- Early intervention developmental specialist
- Community college professor

Make the most of your skills and talents. Get on the path today.

Figure 1. Brochure page outlining the CCC-UIC pathway and related career options.

experiences within the frameworks of their aspirations, abilities and lives to extend learning beyond campus boundaries and timeframes" (NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising, 2006). For students in early childhood related programs across the state and the country, the job of synthesizing and contextualizing takes on even greater importance because of the ambiguity of the early childhood profession and range of credential and licensing requirements (Nitecki, 2012). Additionally, our experience tells us that students enter our institutions at various points in life and with varying degrees of academic preparation and goals.

Advising in the CCC system relies heavily on advisors within the Student Services Department. These advisors need to be able to guide students across the breadth of the college curriculum, which can require knowledge of over 100 different programs. In addition, over the past ten years, advisors at CCC have had variable numbers of advisees, at times topping out at 500 students per advisor. Students come with numerous transcripts and varied course and work experiences making the process even more convoluted. Students and advisors must navigate incoming coursework, the state credentialing system, child development coursework needs, and previous general education which may include a need for developmental coursework. Advisors must not only be knowledgeable about the programs at CCC to assure students do not get lost in a system of pathways, placement exams, and course options, but also about the numerous workforce requirements across different sectors (e.g., child care, Headstart, and public schools) in Early Childhood.

The traditional community college model of advisors within a student services department and outside of the academic department makes appropriate and accurate advising in the complicated field of early childhood very difficult. Therefore, we recommended a model where students interested in pursuing a career in ECE meet directly with child development faculty, in addition to their advisors, in order to receive content-specific advising. This content-level expertise provides the support students need to make appropriate decisions for their personal career goals.

In addition to considering the logistical and structural needs of advising, we challenged ourselves to consider our philosophical approach to each of our interactions with students. In order for student transfer to be successful, it was necessary that the faculty and advisors at UIC understand the specific needs of community college students. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) reports that community college students often have more immediate work-life balance considerations; i.e., when and where they can take classes and how many classes they can take per semester and two-thirds (67%) are academically unprepared for higher education and require remediation (American Association of Community Colleges, 2016). Navigating the complex systems in higher education is a challenge for any student, but ECE students have the additional burden of needing to navigate a complex professional field as well. They also often work long hours and experience high levels of stress due to economic insecurity (Whitebook, Phillips, & Howes, 2014). These challenges necessitate not only accurate advising and supporting materials, but also intensive and nuanced guidance that fully assists students as they make educational and career decisions.

As coordinators and advisors in our respective programs, we settled on a strengths-based approach that utilized knowledge and principles of reflective supervision, often used in the field of infant mental health and other birth to three contexts (Parlakian, 2001). (These principles recognize the complexity and emotional toll of working directly with and on behalf of very young children and highlight value and support for students currently serving the ECE field.) Our focus was on building relationships and providing a safe environment for active listening and thoughtful questioning. Individualizing student experiences was essential to the advising framework. Because our students come with a range of strengths and understandings, our framework allowed us to focus on engaging students in the right pathway for each student. We not only utilized this framework in advising our students but also modeled this form of interaction and assistance in our work with each other and those supporting our students, including their families. For example, in UIC's Early Childhood Alternative certification

program, we started using the phrase "helicopter grandchildren" because of the phone calls from students' children and grandchildren seeking to provide support to family members who were in the program. It was an important learning experience for us as we realized that in some cases the best way to help students was to support someone in their close network who could provide even more individualized attention.

Recommendations and Conclusions

Through this process, we refined our goals for our partnership, refocused our energy on sustaining student transfer and success and renewed our commitment to preparing the early childhood workforce in the City of Chicago. This attention gave great clarity to our philosophies, processes, and strategies for success. Given this detailed focus, our recommendations and conclusions are rooted in our involvement in what we have learned from participating in this project and from our combined experiences preparing early childhood professionals. We also believe that there is great promise for wider implementation by replicating our processes. Specifically, we recommend the following:

1. Shift to a *strengths-based approach* to supporting and guiding students from entry to exit;

2. Provide *intensive, nuanced, and field specific advising*, that utilizes precise strategies from creating and sustaining a network of support for students to intensive mentoring and counseling services; and

3. Develop *innovations in instructional delivery* that are student sensitive and responsive.

A strengths-based model of recruitment, program design and delivery, and advising not only recognizes the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of our existing ECE workforce, but also has the potential to expand it. While there is no doubt in the research base (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015) and in our own experiences that increased qualifications and specialized education in early childhood is required for the profession, we also prize passion, commitment, and cultural competencies.

These values are strengths that in supportive conditions (e.g., intensive advising and innovative instructional design, see following description) can provide the foundation for increasing one's competencies related to working with young children and their families. Suggestions for shifting from deficit to strengths-based thinking include targeting specific populations (e.g., bilingual students, parents, and teacher assistants) for program recruitment, messaging from higher education institutions, as well as credentialing agencies that focus on capabilities and resources potential students may have versus the requirements they need. Additionally, "student friendly" transfer agreements and program scheduling are important.

Our second recommendation, intensive and nuanced advising, is critical to a flexible model of transfer and ultimately student success in our programs. Because each college and university system has highly complex internal structures unique to their specific context, and the larger landscape of ECE in the State of Illinois is constantly in flux, all parties involved in advising will need to stay abreast of shifts in practice and procedure both internally and externally. Not only will college advisors at partnering institutions need additional training regarding the specific nature of this partnership but ECE faculty must provide the detailed and often subtle advising required to help students achieve success.

Supportive written materials that market the program (see Figure 1) and detail its overall structure in an accessible and easy-to-read format are also necessary for advising purposes. Partners must ensure accuracy of these materials and provide them to any personnel who may come into contact with ECE students. Attention must be paid to not only the content of the advising but also to the advising delivery systems. Students who have complicated transcripts, degrees from other countries, and years of field and life experiences may require advisors who understand the minutiae of the field and can advise these students accurately while recognizing their existing contributions as professionals. This model of individualized advising is grounded in relationship building and collaboration. In addition, considerations should be paid to students who come with the added constraints

of adult life and work responsibilities as they may require advising outside of regular work hours and face-to-face models.

Lastly, we focused on innovative, responsive instructional delivery. Varied and innovative instructional delivery methods allow colleges to serve students in the ways that best attend to the curricular content *and* students' strengths and needs. We recommend varied and inclusive models of online and face-to-face instructional delivery (e.g., hybrids and cohort models) with comprehensive scheduling offering coursework during the weekdays, the evenings, and Saturdays. For our online courses offerings we focused on creating continuity across the instructional design. Thus, the available online courses share branding and navigation so that students transferring from one institution to another will experience some familiarity across courses and programs.

Our experience is that cohort models allow institutions to maximize faculty strength-based advising and mentoring while building in peer relationships that can add support and a strong sense of community to our student population. In our project, all three institutions have utilized this method of program delivery and have found students show great success in course and program retention and completion. Additionally, the sense of community continues into the field of practice, building lasting relationships among early childhood professionals. Finally, we also recommend careful consideration of geographical and work constraints. Many of our students work in Illinois licensed childcare centers, where they are required by law to maintain adult/child ratios. This can mandate that students have access to educational opportunities in their immediate community. We believe students may need to obtain education near their homes, work, and communities. We should consider not only expanding Saturday and night course offerings but also expanding college services from registration to tutoring near the communities that need them the most.

References

American Association of Community Colleges. (2016). *Showcase your excellence*. American Association of Community Colleges. Retrieved from http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Pages/default.aspx

Cassidy, D. (2015). *A perspective on early childhood education and articulation*. Retrieved from https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/articulation-agreements

Cho, E. K. (2015). Pathways to EC teacher preparation. In L. Couse & S. Recchia (Eds.), *Handbook of early childhood teacher education* (pp. 165-180). New York, NY: Routledge.

Dee, T. S. (2004). Teachers' race and student achievement in a randomized experiment. *The Review of Economics and Statistics,* 86, 195-210.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other peoples children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York, NY: The New Press.

Hawley, W., & Nieto, S. (2010). Another inconvenient truth: Race and ethnicity matter. *Educational Leadership, 68*(3), 68-71.

Illinois State Board of Education. (n.d.). *Educator licensure*. Retrieved from http://www.isbe.net/licensure/html/testing.htm

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying framework*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

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

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teaching for African-American students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

LeMoine. S. (2008). *Workforce designs: A policy blueprint for state early childhood professional development systems*. Washington DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Moll, L. C., & González, N. (2004). Engaging life: A funds of knowledge approach to multicultural education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (pp. 699-715). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising. (2006). *NACADA concept of academic advising*. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources web site: http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Concept-of-Academic-Advising-a598.aspx

Nelson, C. C., Main, C., & Kushto-Hoban, J. (2012). *Breaking it down and building it out: Enhancing collective capacity to improve early childhood teacher preparation in Illinois*. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/8051064/Enhancing_Collective_Capacity_to_Improve_Early_Childhood_Teacher_Preparation_in_Illinois

Nitecki, E. (2012). The culture of family: How a model early childhood teacher preparation program navigates a limited context. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 33, 127–143.

Parlakian, R. (2001). *Look listen and learn: Reflective supervision and relationship-based work*. Washington, DC: Zero to Three.

Ray, A., Bowman, B., Bobbins, J. (2006). *Preparing early childhood teachers to successfully educate all children: The contribution of four-year undergraduate teacher preparation*. Retrieved from https://www.erikson.edu/research/preparing-early-childhood-teachers-to-successfully-educate-all-children/

University of Illinois at Chicago. (2014). *Early childhood alternative certificate data* [statistics]. Data retrieved from the UIC Early Childhood alternative certification program admissions files from 2007 to 2014 and administered by Catherine Main. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Education. Available from cmain@uic.edu

University of Illinois at Chicago Transfer Assistance Center. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://registrar.uic.edu/transfer-assistance/

Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014). *Worthy work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

Whitehead, J. (2016). *Illinois ECE workforce data update* [PowerPoint presentation]. Presented at the PDAC Steering Meeting, January 2016.

Closing Thoughts

CHAPTER 15

Bridging Diverse ECE Preparation Programs Through Partnership: Tackling Complexities and Sustaining Change

Nancy I. Latham, Stephanie A. Bernoteit, and Johnna C. Darragh Ernst

Key Words: articulation, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, credentials, degree completion, diversity, geography, partnership development theory, partnerships, teacher licensure, transfer, workforce development

Overview

The faculty voices in this monograph reflect the diverse foci, collaborative models, process paradigms, and intended and unintended outcomes of the partnerships in the EPPI grant project. The final chapters underscore the three major themes and the ways in which partner engagement, transfer pathways, and workforce development are all integrated, intertwined, and contingent on one another. By design through the EPPI grant application process, these institutional partners were asked to identify issues and create and implement specific, impactful solutions. The nature of this charge made the creation, nurturing, and maintenance of the partnerships essential to truly substantive outcomes. The varied entry requirements of the early childhood workforce in Illinois, as well as the national call for career pathways in the field that rest on the attainment of credentials and degrees, formed the basis of workforce development as a major theme threaded throughout all of the projects represented here. Not surprisingly the partnerships, consisting of faculty at 4-year and 2-year institutions, invested a great deal of effort to address identified issues with student transfer and

the role it plays as a bridge in the continuum of a practitioner's preparation path. It is important to consider the insights and lessons learned from each individual project while also understanding the trends and patterns across these partnerships.

The Partnership Foundation

The partnerships described in these pages were substantial, deeply committed and organically based in the shared, identified issues of Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce development. There were many commonalities among the partnerships regarding their formation, work processes, and maintenance. Each noted how essential the partnership was in not only accomplishing the goals decided on but in sustaining change beyond the life of the EPPI grant.

Many of the voices described authentic partnership formation practices, relationship building, specific relational and communication strategies within the partnership, and having a common, unifying goal that moved the partnership in a shared direction. These partnership elements directly correlate with McQuaid's Partnership Development Theory (McQuaid, 2000). McQuaid's theory provides five dimensions of partnership including (a) the partnership purpose, (b) who the partners are and their relationships, (c) timing, (d) where activities are occurring, and (e) how activities of the partnership will be implemented.

Partnership Purpose

All of the partnerships represented articulated a strong sense of mutually established common purpose.

> From the start, the partnership between Loyola University Chicago and Harold Washington College was distinctly different from anything else attempted at our respective institutions, as we came to the table with a shared vision of possibility and hope for collaboration. (Asimov, Kennedy, & Lees, 2016, p. 28)

These self-described purposes were specific to identified partnership needs and many of them were complex and layered. However, most partnerships articulated a specific, succinct, collaborative purpose that fueled their individual projects.

> We grounded our work on the dual premises that (1) we needed multiple paths for different roles and sectors and (2) we wanted to build a strengths-based model that acknowledged the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of the workforce and commitment to young children and their families. (Main, Asimow, & Connor, 2016, p. 265)

Most of the projects clearly described ways that a shared purpose or common vision truly drove the project; this was key to the successful attainment of the planned project outcomes.

> From the beginning of our work on this grant, all of the group members knew that we were focusing on an issue that had long been a problem for students from community colleges. That problem was: How do we transform the learning from an AAS degree into something that is equal to higher level university knowledge? (Latorre & Batchelor, 2016, p. 77)

Many partners also credited the common purpose with eliminating some possible barriers to collaboration such as top-down directed thinking, territorial issues, or perceived competitive threats.

> The process of looking more closely at courses at times became "sticky" in treading on each other's turf, if you will. That is, in general, faculty in higher education consider their courses to be their own, and when others enter the arena to make changes in those courses, they might be somewhat resistant. We were all very sensitive to these possible reactions, and because of our good relationships, we honored and respected each other's expertise. As a result, we made much progress toward meeting our articulation goals. (Bezdicek, Comuntzis Page, & Helm, 2016, p. 253)

Another partnership identified their commonality as follows:

> In answering our rhetorical questions, we faced a professionally awkward, tacit issue head-on: *Why collaborate with a marketplace competitor to solve a problem, especially in an era of shrinking enrollments?* We talked this through openly and honestly, in confidence, before we finalized our funding proposals. We considered the benefits and risks of not connecting our curriculum work. Soon enough, we determined that by collaborating, we would make each of our programs better. In unity there would be strength. (Donovan, Steinhaus, Potenza, George, Bulat, & Walker, 2016, p. 188)

Partnership Makeup and Relationships

A repeated theme throughout this monograph is the importance of recruiting the right partners into the partnership and nurturing the partnership relationship which reflects McQuaid's (2000) second element. Thus, multiple voices reflected how this was not only essential to the project success but also a lasting and substantive outcome.

> What we discovered throughout this process is that it is all about the people that are involved. Everyone came to the table ready to become completely immersed in the project. Our group was an incredible powerhouse of creative thinking, and we all appreciated each other's talents and expertise. (Latorre & Batchelor, 2016, p. 77)

The real investment of time concerning having the right stakeholders "at the table," deeply invested in the partnership, and nurturing the relationships and communication needed to make the partnerships a vehicle for change proved, for most of the partnerships, to require significant time and effort. Wagner (2001), also maintains the importance of relationships and relationship building as one of the four steps in his S-U-R-E formula for educational change which includes (1) shared vision; (2) understanding the need for change; (3) respectful relationships; and (4) engagement strategies based on commitment to the goal. Below are two examples of this from our partnerships.

> The more we considered our common goal—making it easier for ECE students to earn their bachelor degrees—we recognized that what *would* be *innovative* was to first create a partnership of our 12 institutions (eight 2-year, four 4-year, public and private) that one day would result in transfer pathways between and across these institutions, not only between associate and bachelor degrees but between the same institution types. (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 181)

And

> The common thread through the experience was a growing sense of coming together with energy, purpose, and sense of connection with other communities within the ECE field. We found that an empowered network's strength is anchored in the trust and respect participants have for each other while working for the greater good of children and their families. (Smyrniotis, Nugent, Lee, Arquette, Wolffe, Bussan, & Antola Crowe, 2016, p. 138)

Partnership Timing

Although most of the partnerships provided descriptive detail about the strength and essential nature of the partnership itself, it should be noted that the partnerships were very much on a diverse continuum in regard to the maturity of the relationships. Some took the opportunity of this project to develop and nurture brand new partnerships around a shared issue or goal, others had long been considering the idea of a partnership for specific ECE workforce preparation purposes.

> [Fifteen years ago] in 2001, we began thinking about a partnership that addressed the seemingly simple question, "Why shouldn't students in the city of Chicago who attend their local public community college have an option to matriculate to their local public university?" (Main et al., 2016, p. 265)

Still other partnerships described the grant as an opportunity to "rebuild" long-held relationships around a common purpose.

The primary goal of this project was to rebuild relationships between faculty and teacher candidates in the early childhood programs at Parkland College and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The two programs teach different student populations, but the graduates of our two programs target very similar populations of high-need children and families. (Sanders-Smith & Gaumer, 2016, p. 163)

Partnership Geography

Geographic proximity did play a role in some of the established and/or existing partnerships described in these projects; McQuaid (2000) refers to this as spatial proximity. However, it is logical and reasonable as geography is significant in where students seek professional preparation and the institutions to which they transfer.

The viability of a meaningful partnership among these institutions became clear early on, not only because of geographical proximity, but because the strengths of each program provided a solid foundation on which to build a productive partnership. (Pruitt, Diez, Livesey, & Szymczak, 2016, p. 146)

Most 2-year and 4-year institutions are very aware of their "feeder" institution—meaning, the school(s) from or to which the majority of their students transfer. The fact that partnerships would emerge from, or be built upon, geographic origins is not surprising given the charge and nature of the EPPI grant work.

What makes our consortium unique in Illinois is how it brings together geographically situated, professionally similar faculties who otherwise have few if any ways to routinely interact and discuss curriculum, as well as find solutions to the problems ECE professionals face in earning degrees. (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 187)

Some partnerships dealt with specific barriers related to geography, such as in the case of rural partnerships as opposed to more urban partnerships. Such partnerships specifically addressed the issue of geographic proximity

both from the "feeder" school aspect and also the barrio of geographic challenges in the rural partnership for student pathways to degrees.

> Southern Illinois is mainly rural, populated with small towns and public institutions of higher learning, both 4 year universities and local community colleges…. The early childhood workforce centers on state funded early childhood programs and private care centers. In East Saint Louis, most children are cared for in homes by neighbors or close relations…. For many of these caregivers, the possibility of earning a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree is made impossible due to many barriers existent within the education system. (Latorre & Batchelor, 2016, p. 67)

> McIntyre et al. state, "Both the poverty and [low] population issues contribute to a third factor that must be addressed by our institutions: travel distance, time, and cost to attend college. Because these are a common concern among students, our institutions have begun offering more courses in online formats. Some of the community colleges in our group now offer the full ECE degree online. Most of the online students tend to seek full-time employment in the field of early childhood care and education while taking courses." (McIntyre, Thompson, King, Smith, & Toliver, 2016, p. 227)

The Partnership Process

Although many similarities can be gleaned from the descriptions of partnership processes in these projects, several trends emerged; for example, things like the importance of consistent, face-to-face time together and dedicating some of this time to specifically learning more about the programs represented by each individual partner.

> Our first meeting was focused on understanding each other's curricula and looking for the commonalities between our programs. We examined curriculum and noted that our programs were very similar in both content and structure, utilizing same state and accredited organization standards (NAEYC);

incorporating courses in core foundations, methods of teaching and field experiences; and culminating in a practicum where knowledge and skills were applied (Mathien, Nepstad, Potenza, Kim, & Mertes, 2016, p. 111).

Another example is below:

Both partners entered this project with a degree of concern about whether it could work; however, in an effort to keep our collaborations purposeful and productive, we committed ourselves to learning about each other's institution and students, sharing our programs, and building upon our experiences with articulation rather than operating from a standpoint of "No-that is not possible." (Asimow et al., 2016, p. 28)

Additionally, the idea of mutual respect in the process was described by some participants. This was discussed earlier as an essential part of the relationship building, but it also appeared as critical in the process of the work itself. One set of participants stated:

The primary work of this collaborative process was to go beyond the traditional top-down remedial paradigm articulation agreement . . . by creating a plan that honored the life experience and educational achievements of transferring students, and built solid partnerships along the way. Our commitment to this standard led our process and informed our plan. (Pruitt et al., 2016, p. 159)

Another group of participants opined:

The success of the collaboration was attributed, at least in part, to the mutual respect between the faculty at the two institutions, and to an absence of turf defending. (Mathien et al., 2016, p. 110)

The partnerships throughout these stories reflect deep, professional relationships that sustained these groups as they worked to design and implement solutions to the identified partnership issues. Some of these partnerships were long-standing and fueled by a common purpose, others came

together and formed the partnership around an issue or purpose. Many of the identified issues related to early childhood workforce development and means that could smooth, better support, or more strongly articulate and strengthen pathways between the various institutions. Additionally, some partnerships directed their efforts to addressing current in-service practitioner issues that also had implications for preparation practices. It appears, from the nature of this work, that the authenticity of the partnership served as a foundation for identifying the issues, developing a plan or process for change, implementing the plan, and perhaps most importantly, sustaining the change beyond the funding life of the project.

> With issues of access and affordability plus declining enrollment and frozen state funding, it is imperative that we re-conceptualize higher education to best serve our students. Inter-institutional collaborations based on mutual respect and with students' success as the goal are crucial for changing the way our education system functions. (Mathien et al., 2016, p. 118)

Problems and Process

Although the specific issue(s) addressed by each partnership and the process foci were as diverse as the partnerships themselves, there were threads of similarity in process designs that reflected basic models and elements of change theory (Kotter, 2007; Tuckman, 1965). These elements included: (1) identifying the issue(s); (2) analyzing the issue in its current state or context, as well as the significance of the issue; (3) exploring secondary, connected issues contributing to the problem; (4) developing and implementing a plan/process to achieve the issue change targeted; (5) assessing and evaluating impact; and (6) sustaining change.

Identifying the Issues

A wide variety of issues were identified by the partnership groups. Many centered around issues of transfer, articulation, and strengthening that continuum. Some of the transfer issues targeted included initiating transfers agreements between 2- and 4-year partners and enhancing existing agreements by removing barriers, specifically in transferring from the AAS

degree into the BA level licensure degree. Some of these common barriers included redundancy and lost credit due to re-taking of coursework, and better articulation of specific courses between partner institutions to make transfer smoother and credential, licensure, and endorsement obtainment easier. Two examples from this monograph are presented next.

> As individual partner triads talked among themselves and with other triads, we returned to the same deeper "what" and "why" questions the RFP's charge provoked: What would be truly innovative in the postsecondary early childhood teacher preparation arena? What haven't we considered or attempted to do before now that would address the chronic issues early childhood professionals face in pursuing lifelong education (e.g., loss of "old" credit hours, no credit for demonstrable work experience)? Why hasn't anyone managed to address these issues before now? (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 181)

And

> To address this initial goal, the partners worked to identify five to six courses or 16-18 credit hours that could be transferred in a more systematic way between and among institutions, increasing the probability of degree completion and reducing students' time, effort and financial resources needed to do so. (Steinhaus & Walker, 2016, p. 49)

In addition, some identified issues centered on concerns facing the field and how the partnership could both positively impact the issue at the in-service practitioner level as well as infuse a new understanding into pre-service teacher preparation. Some of these issues included meeting specific areas of shortage in the field such as ESL endorsed teachers.

> As faculty in teacher education, we visit schools and work with teachers in local schools, and we have noted that there are teacher shortages in educating and supporting children that qualify as English language learners (ELLs) in local schools and there are needs for professional development such as enlightening

> teachers and their assistants with practices that provide children with creative learning experiences. (Bezdicek et al., 2016, p. 240)

> . . . It is critical that Illinois address the needs of diverse populations in rural areas. As more and more children are speaking languages other than English and are having to learn English while they are learning other content important for their future endeavors in school, it is imperative that professionals understand the best methods for teaching these children. (McIntyre et al., 2016, p. 229)

Still other topics centered around new state-wide expectations for math standards and instruction as well as preparing both teachers and future teachers to plan, implement and assess high quality instruction around these standards. Two follow:

> We decided—rather than focus only on the articulation work (which has been ongoing)—that we would build relationships and use the Reggio Emilia Approach to teach mathematics methods to pre-service teacher candidates. In this way, we were able to target all candidates in both programs—not only candidates who will be transferring to UIUC from Parkland, but also students who will complete an Associate of Applied Science degree and/or certificate at Parkland and go directly into the field, and students at UIUC who did not transfer from another institution. (Sanders-Smith & Gaumer, 2016, p. 163)

And

> In addition, a community initiative focusing on early childhood mathematics contributed to the design of the grant. As a result, the grant had three areas of emphasis: English Language Learners (ELLs), mathematics, and early childhood special education. (ECSE) (Smyrniotis et al., 2016, p. 126)

Analyzing Current Context and Significance of the Issue

Many of the partnerships described the importance of analyzing current context to better understand common identified issues. This analysis was

multi-faceted between the partnerships but several commonalities in analysis were threaded throughout these voices. Among them: truly understanding the workings of the programs represented in the partnership, the partnership circumstances, and varied and diverse constituent groups and areas served before identifying and addressing specific common issues.

> Our first meeting was focused on understanding each other's curricula and looking for the commonalities between our programs. We examined curriculum and noted that our programs were very similar in both content and structure, utilizing same state and accredited organization standards (NAEYC); incorporating courses in core foundations, methods of teaching and field experiences; and culminating in a practicum where knowledge and skills were applied. (Mathien et al., 2016, p. 111)

Still another partnership concluded:

> The final outcome from this partnership was increased awareness and respect for the different cultures and communities within which we work. The faculty from the university became more aware of the need for portable and stackable credentials across our rural region, and the community college faculty became more conscious of state requirements for licensure and how these requirements influence programming within the first two years. (McIntyre et al., 2016, p. 235)

This analysis, for most projects, further included examining the constituents served by each partner and the ECE groups impacted by the partnership programs. Many voices also reflected on how these paths intersected. One example is next.

> All partners had anecdotes of center directors and building principals contacting us in hope that we could somehow figure out a way for an employee to complete an ECE bachelor degree that built upon previous coursework as well as years of documented, relevant work experiences that were being accounted for in typical transcript analysis. (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 181)

Another partnership felt as follows:

> Our engagement with community partners for feedback on program design brought the added benefit of opening up opportunities for new avenues to close the gap between pre-service and in-practice professional learning. (Pruitt et al., 2016, p. 151)

These reflections, based on analysis, seemed to inform the partners' thinking in regard both to refining their identified issues as well as deepening their understudying of the possible significance to the field in addressing the issues.

Connected, Contributing Issues

It is important to note that out of both the identifying and analysis of a common issue in the context of an established partnership, projects examined substantively ancillary issues that might also contribute to the problem and its solutions. For example, several projects established a common goal of smoothing the transfer paths between institutions and levels for candidates, however a contributing barrier identified was advisement and communication practices.

> The articulation work of this partnership was paralleled by discussions among our colleagues in the larger metropolitan consortium (CACRECE) of which the partnership was a part. Discussions around advising, its forms,processes, and current functionality emerged from this larger group along with questions such as, "How can we ensure that students are getting the information that they need about transferring, that the outcomes of our work will be shared with students?" (Steinhaus & Walker, 2016, p. 55)

And

> Building the system with multiple entry and exit ramps for various career pathways in early childhood and developing communication and recruitment plans is only half of our design process. We know retention and success of our students will be dependent upon our advising system. (Main et al., 2016, p. 271)

Several programs also acknowledged the ancillary barrier of the state requirement of passing the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) to progress in their preparation programs and some students' test-taking confidence and skills in meeting this requirement. The need to build in supports for successful passing such required tests, specifically in licensure tracks, was addressed by several projects; see example below.

> Immediately recognized was the need to address an obstacle many prospective early childhood candidates faced: passing a basic skills exam, the "admission ticket" into a licensure program and the teaching profession. (Bressman, Keneman, Lems, Stegemoller, Olson, & Rinchiuso, 2016, p. 90)

The understanding of these ancillary barriers informed project partnerships as to ways to eliminate such barriers. Other partnerships specifically sought constituent group information around the identified issue, which provided a very specific lens that also informed proposed and implemented solutions.

> In feedback from over 70 community partners, it was overwhelmingly confirmed that the quality of field-based experience is critically important…. Based on our view that this facilitation depended greatly on the classroom mentor teacher's influence, we developed an innovative online training module that mentor teachers could access and complete prior to accepting a student for mentoring. (Pruitt et al., 2016, p. 155)

This attention to contributing issues seemed to strengthen projects' proposed solutions and actual outcomes. Impact was also enhanced due to attention given to contributing barriers and issues.

Developing and Implementing the Change Plan/Process

Although the approaches used to tackle issues were as varied as the identified issues themselves, almost all projects commented on the importance of solid planning across the partnership for implementation of any proposed change plans or processes. This planning included bringing in

institutional staff and administration to both help inform and smooth the process.

> Discussions of the . . . issues unfolded over several months, during which time we involved administration and additional faculty/staff to assist in identifying critical considerations and potential resources. (Asimow et al., 2016, p. 33)

Again, the importance of a binding, common, decided upon issue by a particular partnership united the strategies identified to address it. Several of the projects reflected on this matter and how it served to strengthen the implementation processes, both as the complexities of change plans were fully understood and in understanding unintended "bumps" in the road.

> Given the common questions and learning needs we shared, we devoted time during the proposal-writing phase to pinpoint the essential collaboration outcomes and exploration processes we planned to achieve jointly. (Donovan et al., 2016, p. 186)

Assessing and Evaluating Impact

Due to project timelines and charges, specific assessment and evaluation plans could not be expected. However, several projects reflected on what they felt they could see as long-term and solidifying effects of the projects. In addition, many projects reported anecdotal outcomes that included participant and constituent reactions to implemented changes as well as relational changes at multiple levels within the institutions. Below is one such anecdote.

> The most important outcome of this project has been ongoing conversations between early childhood faculty at UIUC and Parkland College. We are continuing to discuss opportunities to link the two programs. Currently identified opportunities include a shared National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) student chapter…. (Sanders-Smith & Gaumer, 2016, p. 174)

Another anecdote is as follows:

> When candidates adjourned for the day, their enthusiasm was high and their interest in early childhood licensure was heightened as further evidenced by exit surveys. (Bressman et al., 2016, p. 94)

A possible follow-up project might look at very specific impacts on students, i.e., transfers between partnership institutions, successful degree completion, etc. at the three, five and ten year marks as well as partnership maturity and work in the subsequent years.

Sustaining Change

Lastly, the thread of sustainability was evident in the final reflections of the projects. Some of these intentions for sustaining the work of the project were embedded in the desire to uphold and even further develop and grow the partnership.

> Our intention is that this relationship will continue to be an integral part of the programs at UIUC and Parkland so that students can both see the clear pathway from Parkland to UIUC and also the shared values in 2- and 4-year early childhood programs. (Sanders-Smith & Gaumer, 2016, p. 174)

And

> Making this plan work is all about establishing relationships and respecting each other's input. For the future, it is also about maintaining those relationships, valuing each other's work, and finding new ways to help students find the right road map to continue and complete their education. (Latorre & Batchelor, 2016, p. 78)

Other partnerships had determined specific next directions on which they would focus in response both to their identified common objectives and lessons learned as part of the implemented changes.

> It is imperative that we continue to grow our early childhood community, building networks for long-term sustainability. (Smyrniotis et al., 2016, p. 141)

And

> . . . We are exploring options for utilizing the multiple sites of each of our campuses to host the final four or five semesters of the 2+2 plan. (Pruitt et al., 2016, p. 158)

Recommendations by Partners for Future Affiliations

Recommendations from the voices heard in this monograph tend to be project-specific next steps. However, field and state-wide recommendations are obvious in the themes of partner engagement, transfer pathways, and workforce development. Many recommendations were directed toward smoothing preparation pathways, yet some of these also crossover into the workforce development theme in larger field-wide generalizable terms. Systemic implications of these voices are discussed in the implications section.

The recommendations related to partnerships were about sustaining, protecting, supporting, and continuing the partnerships that served as the foundation for these projects. Here is one case in point:

> By working together, institutions can help "shared" candidates navigate a successful and seamless transition from the 2- to the 4-year experience. (Bressman et al., 2016, p. 98)

Another illustration follows:

> Regardless, the importance of relationship building in this process must not be undervalued. Growing to understand, respect, and support one another was an essential step in identifying how our efforts address our shared social justice missions; this process cannot be ignored. (Asimow et al., 2016, p. 42)

The sentiment that the partnership relationships are critical to project success and the acknowledgement that building and maintaining

relationships as positions and people shift institutionally—and as mandates shift at state, national and local levels—make a focus on partnerships an important recommendation.

Additionally, as previously highlighted, many of the projects summarized in these voices, focused on smoothing workforce development pathways. The UIC project (Main et al., 2016) referred to three specific recommendations that capture this theme. First, a "shift to a *strengths-based approach* to supporting and guiding students from entry to exit." This recommendation was concluded by several partnerships whether through smoothing transfer routes, eliminating redundant credits in transfer, or developing supportive systems across the path that encourage students at all entry and exit points.

> . . . We believe that a seamless pathway can be created for AAS degree holders to progress to a bachelor degree and then to teacher licensure, without having to replicate the early childhood coursework taken at the 2-year college level. (Mathien et al., 2016, p. 120)

Here is a second illustration of this point:

> Early childhood teacher education must be viewed as a four-year program commitment that begins at the community college and ends with the awarding of the baccalaureate degree and teaching license at the 4-year institution. (Bressman et al., 2016, p. 99)

Still another representation states:

> . . . to go beyond the traditional top-down remedial paradigm articulation agreement (Amatea, Mixon, & McCarthy, 2013; Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015) by creating a plan that honored the life experience and educational achievements of transferring students, and built solid partnerships along the way. (Pruitt et al., 2016, p. 159)

The second UIC recommendation, in regard to partnership, centered on developing and strengthening the supports needed to assist students not only in navigating workforce development pathways but in eliminating

barriers that can often stall their progression on the path. Providing "*intensive, nuanced, and field specific advising,* that utilizes specific strategies from creating and sustaining a network of supports for students to intensive mentoring and counseling services" (Main et al., 2016, p. 274) includes improving communication on program design, expectations and navigation between both faculty and advisors, as well as, advisors and students. Beyond just communication, these recommendations included developing and revising systems to support students in and bridge for them the transition between pathway levels and institutional levels.

The third UIC pathways recommendation, developing "*innovations in instructional delivery* that are student sensitive and responsive," (Main et al., 2016, p. 274) extends the supports described above, and related to advisement and other "bridge" support processes, to instructional delivery. Many of the projects developed "bridge" programs at differing levels. From (1) bridge courses that help students acquire credit for prior experience and learning to (2) designed programming that sequences course work from the associate degree to the bachelor degree level to (3) instructional design strategies that allow access to more students to all levels of the pathway, these recommendations further smooth partnership avenues.

Serving both in-service and pre-service practitioners, recommendations to move to a competency-based system and cross-institutional assessment tools, were also raised.

> The transformation to competency-based assessment and cross-institutional assessment processes will be realized through invested acceptance from ECE higher education faculty across Illinois, as the state has already adopted the competency-based credentialing model. (Sanden, Darragh Ernst, Haman, Quesenberry, Latham, Christianson, & Smyrniotis, 2016, p. 215)

These broader systemic recommendations open the ECE conversation not just at the state but also at the national level, as well as implicate possible workforce and preparation pathways beyond our field.

References

Amatea, E. S., Mixon, K., & McCarthy, S. (2013). Preparing teachers to collaborate with families: Contributions of family systems counselors to a teacher preparation program. *The Family Journal, 21*(2), 136-145.

Asimov, J. G., Kennedy, A. S., & Lees, A. T. (2016). Beginning with yes: Reframing the narrative in teacher preparation to support community college transfer students in early childhood special education. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 26–45). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Bezdicek, J., Comuntzis Page, G., & Helm, J. (2016). Supporting change in the education of English language learners and young children in central Illinois. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 238–259). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Bressman, S., Keneman, A., Lems, K., Stegemoller, J., Olson, M. A., & Rinchiuso, M. (2016). Transfer pathways beyond articulation: A partnership initiative between National Louis University and Triton Community College. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 82–101). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Donovan, M. A., Steinhaus, P., Potenza, A., George, A., Bulat, C., Walker, D. (2016). When innovation means breaking the enrollment management mold: Building a postsecondary institution transfer network consortium. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 178–197). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015.) *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

Kotter, J. P. (2007). Leading change. Why transformation efforts fail. *Harvard Business Review*, January 2007, 96-103.

Latorre, M., & Batchelor, M. (2016). Providing a pathway to degree completion for child care associates in rural southern Illinois. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 66–81). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Main, C., Asimow, J. G., & Connor, K. (2016). Refine, refocus, and renew: Early childhood preparation pathways in Chicago. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 260–279). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Mathien, T., Nepstad, C., Potenza A., Kim. J., & Mertes, W. (2016). Building on trust: How three institutions came together to create an innovative partnership for student transfer. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 102–121). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education

McIntyre, C., Thompson, S. D., King, D., Smith, R., & Toliver, M. (2016). Career pathways in early childhood in rural communities. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 224–237). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

McQuaid, R. W. (2000). Theory of partnerships - why have partnerships? In S. P. Osborn (Ed.), *Public–private partnerships for public services: An international perspective*. Routledge, London, pp. 9-35. ISBN 978-0415212687

Pruitt, R., Diez, C., Livesey, K., & Szymczak, M. (2016). Shifting the balance: Re-envisioning early childhood education preparation design through meaningful collaboration. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 144–161). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Sanden, S., Darragh Ernst, J. C., Hamann, K., Quesenberry, A., Latham, N. I., Christianson, D., & Smyrniotis, A. (2016). Supporting early childhood workforce development and pathways: Developing a competency-based assessment system in Illinois. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 200–223). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Sanders-Smith, S. C., & Gaumer, N. (2016). Working together to support math pedagogy: It all adds up for students. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 162–177). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Smyrniotis, A., Nugent, P., Lee, H., Arquette, C. M., Wolffe, R., Bussan, B., & Antola Crowe, H. (2016). Collaborative power: An inter-institutional community partnership. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C.Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 124–143). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Steinhaus, P., & Walker, D. (2016). Cross-institutional advising and curriculum agreements: Supports for transfer and degree completion in early childhood programs. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 46–65). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin, 63*(6): 384–399.

Wagner, T. (2001). Leadership for learning: An action theory of school change. *Phi Delta Kappan, 82*(5): 378-383.

CHAPTER 16

Listening to Voices from the Field: Implications for Higher Education

Johnna C. Darragh Ernst, Nancy I. Latham, and Stephanie A. Bernoteit

Key Words: academic support, assessment, competencies, credentials, degree completion, diversity, field experience, pathways, policy, teacher licensure, transfer, workforce development

Overview

This monograph is a collection of stories of advocacy and partnership, representing a chorus of strong voices describing collaborative strategies supporting student attainment of industry-recognized credentials and degrees. Many faculty voices describe common challenges, which unfold in unique plots and geographic contexts. The partnerships represented in this monograph worked diligently toward the same goal: creating educational experiences, pathways, and opportunities that are responsive to student strengths and needs, and the broader workforce context. The work of these partnerships was accomplished within the fluid and evolving requirements of the early childhood field, the challenging Illinois landscape, and the strong support of state early childhood leadership.

Throughout this monograph, partnerships identified many strategies essential in supporting student attainment of industry-recognized credentials and degrees. These strategies have implications for professional preparation within the field of early childhood education (ECE), as well as the broader context of higher education.

A role of higher education is to support students in completing their educational goals and in ensuring the attainment of competencies needed to be successful within their chosen workforce context. Creating systems that are responsive to student goals and the workforce context requires close examination of processes within and between institutions of higher education, amongst the workforce context and higher education, and amid the intersection of each of these contexts and state guidelines and policy. When adopting a student lens, a seamless pathway from higher education to the targeted field of employment would ideally be transparent, easy-to-navigate, accessible, relevant, and one that minimizes credit loss. As nearly half of all students start their postsecondary careers within community colleges, successful partnership between 2- and 4-year institutions focus on the attainment of a bachelor degree (Boswell, 2004).

Higher education is faced with increasing calls for ensuring student access, affordability, and appropriate supports that are responsive to individual goals and employer needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). The creative strategies covered within this monograph both complement and extend existing research. Chapter One begins with an exploration of major challenges and opportunities within early childhood education preparation programs through examining the themes of workforce development, transfer pathways, and partner engagement. In this final chapter, implications for higher education, again organized by each of these themes, will be discussed.

Many of the strategies within this chapter are within and between institution levers that inform structural policies and practices. Community-based strategies are also shared. There are approaches that focus on each aspect of program design and implementation, from—for example—how standards are organized and assessed to advising practices. Each program within the monograph exists within an institution, and each institution, within the broader system of higher education. While change can happen at the program and institutional level, it is far more likely to be cohesive and pervasive when supported within the broader context. The first implications for the field of higher education generated through this monograph,

therefore, will focus on macro-level, contextual applications, and include:

- Support timely, creative exploration of system and program challenges.

- Create underlying infrastructure incorporating shared language and common ground.

Support Timely, Creative Exploration of System and Program Challenges

While many of the partnerships described within this monograph had enjoyed strong relationships for years, the EPPI grant opportunity, coupled with a mature statewide credentialing system and the recent development of a childcare quality rating system, created opportunities for new partnerships to develop and existing ones to deepen. The EPPI partnership grants were well-timed, as Illinois was increasing investments in industry-recognized credentials and degrees in the early childhood field at the same time institutions were facing pressing needs due to statewide budget issues and limited institutional resources (Steinhaus & Walker, 2016). These factors were coupled with increased demand in the early childhood profession for more highly credentialed teachers. The EPPI grants provided dedicated supports to teacher education programs, enabling state faculty to enact early childhood workforce advocacy efforts (Pruitt, Diez, Livesey, & Szymczak, 2016), and form partnerships based on mutual need and contextual demands. The EPPI grant opportunity, coupled with state policy supporting credential and degree attainment as well as field based workforce development requirements, afforded a confluence of factors that were timely, relevant and critically meaningful to each of the partnerships.

Creating Underlying Infrastructure Incorporating Shared Language and Common Ground

Effective collaboration requires not only a shared vision, but common ground from which to build. Throughout this monograph, several authors (Donovan, Steinhaus, Potenza, George, Bulat, & Walker, 2016; Main, Asimow, & Connor, 2016; Mathien, Nepstad, Potenza, Kim, & Mertes, 2016; Sanden, Darragh Ernst, Hamann, Quesenberry,

Latham, Christianson, & Smyrniotis, 2016) identified the Gateways ECE benchmarks as essential to the work of their partnership. The Gateways benchmarks encompass the ECE professional development standards to which community colleges, universities, and the broader field are required to adhere.

These benchmarks provided an infrastructure from which supportive pathways could be developed. Common benchmarks served as a language bridge as well. While there are points of continuity in pedagogy in community colleges and universities, there may be differences as well. Shared schemas of language and understanding provide a bridge that facilitates problem-solving and creative solutions—if benchmarks are understood as a common foundation, there is a shared schema to communicate from. While benchmarks provided an initial foundation, one partnership in the monograph designed and undertook a process of creating competencies and a competency-based assessment system from the benchmarks (Sanden et al., 2016). This created even greater opportunity in language continuity. The competencies extended the benchmarks, which provided understanding of expected knowledge and skills, to include shared schemas of measurement and data.

As noted, the two practices outlined previously are essential at a systems level, and serve as an important catalyst for the effective formation, development, and functioning of partnerships. When a strong foundation is established, creative problem-solving and exploration of issues, challenges and opportunities can occur within a shared context. Committing time to carefully think through the intersection of varied systems—and how these support or inhibit students in attaining their goals—is the ground work for furthering workforce development initiatives, successful transfer practices, and the development and maintenance of rich partnerships.

Workforce Development Pathways

Successfully developing a workforce requires understanding the needs of the field of employment, understanding the developmental requirements of the individuals likely to seek occupation within that field, and ensuring that higher education creates options and opportunities that support students in attaining competencies that will ensure success within chosen occupations. The recent clear call for higher levels of education tied to specific competencies within the field of early childhood education, coupled with a movement towards the creation of credentials specifically tied to practitioner levels of knowledge and skills (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015), has provided macro-level guidance and an infrastructure from which institutions of higher education can develop responsive pathways supportive of student goal attainment.

Several strategies within this monograph supportive of workforce development pathways reflect and extend current research in higher education, and include:

- Provide targeted academic supports.

- Ensure higher education pedagogy reflects workforce competencies.

- Identify strategies relevant to the field of ECE.

- Develop a workforce pool reflective and supportive of the rich diversity of children and families served.

- Design meaningful field experiences reflective of required workforce competencies.

Provide Targeted Academic Supports

Timely degree completion can be a challenge for many community college students. There are several demographic factors inherent to community college populations that contribute to this challenge. Within the population of early childhood students in the area of Chicago, for example, students are more likely to have children under the age of six living with them, (68%), to experience work-school conflicts, to be enrolled part-time

(43%) and to experience financial challenges (Klostermann, 2010). These challenges are not unique to Chicago, and are particularly demanding as such issues prohibit completion in a timely manner and can prohibit students from even entering into the community college system.

Supporting students in attaining industry-recognized credentials and degrees requires focused attention on cultivating thriving partnerships, ensuring responsiveness to workforce needs, and the creation of flexible pathways. Dedicated attention must be devoted to student academic strengths and challenges and their current developmental trajectories.

Partnerships throughout this monograph stress the importance of just-in-time targeted and intensive supports. Strategies vary from supporting students in developing their literacy skills, to providing content specific writing tutors to helping students adjust to unique expectations (Asimov, Kennedy, & Lees, 2016). These expectations may include alternative learning formats, non-traditional scheduling, and negotiating financial aid (Asimov et al., 2016).

Test preparedness may also be a challenge for many students. Entrance to ISBE licensure pathways within ECE requires attainment of prescribed scores on standardized tests. Students need to be exposed to the pre-requisite knowledge and skills that are necessary for success on tests. Meaningful strategies supporting student success and goal advancement include ensuring that students have access to resources in preparing for the ACT (Asimov et al., 2016), and targeted test preparation support (Bezdicek, Comuntzis Page, & Helm, 2016; Bressman, Keneman, Lems, Stegemoller, Olson, & Rinchiuso, 2016).

One of the key messages shared by many of the partnerships is the importance of not only focusing on the defined competencies within the specified field of employment, but also spending concentrated time considering soft skills and academic preparatory skills, and how these could also be concretely woven into program design.

Ensure Higher Education Pedagogy Reflects Workforce Competencies

Institutions of higher education are limited in their capacity to design programs that prepare students for employment in specified occupations if role expectations are not clearly defined. A shared understanding of what essential workforce knowledge and skills are and how these can be attained is required. Competencies have the potential to provide a schema that serves as a bridge between institutions of higher education. As noted previously, competencies can create not only shared schemas in terms of common language, but also shared schemas in terms of measurement and assessment. Competencies can also serve as a bridge between higher education and workforce performance, encapsulating expected knowledge and skills within context (Sanden et al. 2016).

Utilizing a competency-based system in higher education provides clarity in expected knowledge, skills and information on how these items transfer to roles and opportunities in the workforce. Competency-based systems also support the adoption of a strength-based lens. In the field of early childhood, for example, the workforce is often described as lacking varied skills essential for academic success: academic preparation for the rigor of college-level coursework, material and social resources needed to support their academic pursuits, and necessary literacy skills and levels of English proficiency (Kagan, Kauerz, & Tarrant, 2008). A competency-based system focuses on what students can do, and works to target areas needed for further development, thereby modeling a strengths-based, supportive approach (Main et al. 2016).

Develop a Workforce Pool Reflective and Supportive of the Rich Diversity of Children and Families Served

Developing and recruiting staff, well-suited to supporting and growing the strengths and challenges of those served by the field, is a driving force within workforce development. Unique workforce expansion opportunities in early childhood education include that children and families are comprised of a rich developmental, cultural, and linguistic tapestry, including varied backgrounds, strengths, and needs. Research clearly documents

that children, and their families, benefit from teachers who provide cultur-ally-sensitive pedagogy (Hawley & Nieto, 2010; Moll & González, 2004). Research also supports that the field of early childhood education needs to develop a workforce that reflects and supports the diversity of children and families in the field (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015).

Despite the great benefits a diverse workforce brings to the field, ECE professionals lack diversity, particularly in leadership positions (Ray, Bowman, & Robbins, 2006). Strategies included in this monograph designed to ensure the diversity of the ECE workforce include targeted recruitment of staff reflective of the children and families served within communities (Donovan et al., 2016), as well as the development of highly sought after English as a Second Language and Bilingual Endorsements that include coursework offerings at the community college level (Asimov et al., 2016; Bezdicek et al., 2016; Smyrniotis, Nugent, Lee, Arquette, Wolffe, Bussan, & Antola Crowe, 2016). The latter strategy capitalizes on population strengths and reflects creative pathway development supporting individual and field goals.

Design Meaningful Field Experiences Reflective of Required Workforce Competencies

Field experiences are continuously stressed as a critical component of higher education teacher preparation programs (American Associa-tion of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2010; Heineke, Kennedy, & Lees, 2013). Supporting candidates in documenting mastery of practice through demonstration is an integral component of quality early childhood higher education programs (Institute of Medicine and National Research Council, 2015). Connecting classroom and field performance in cohesive and mean-ingful ways can be a challenge for higher education faculty. Several innova-tive strategies to ensure field experiences were meaningful and applicable to workforce competencies were provided within this monograph.

Examining field-based experiences for incorporation of targeted competencies provides pedagogical advantages. Pruitt et al. (2016) outlined how their partnership created an online training module that developed the

competencies of mentor teachers in the areas of productive communication and constructive assessment of pre-service teachers. Mentors would participate in this training prior to taking on a new mentee. Bezdicek et al. (2016) also described a community-based approach, where targeted skills designed to enhance teacher's skills supporting the development and learning of English Language Learners—and the inclusion of child-centered practices—were extended to practitioners in the community. In addition to working with young children, this approach included enhancing and extending the education of early childhood students.

In addition to exploring relevant practices connecting institutions to the workforce context, investigating how community colleges and universities support students as they navigate transfer is also essential.

Transfer Pathways

Forty-six percent of students in the nation during the 2013-2014 academic year who completed a degree at a 4-year institution had, within the past 10 years, attended a 2-year institution (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2015). A well developed transfer system includes options, opportunities, and clearly defined on and off ramps that directly correspond to field-based workforce opportunities. Despite research that indicates most students entering community colleges intend to obtain a bachelor degree (Horn & Skomsvold, 2011), only a quarter of community college students nationally transfer to 4-year institutions within five years (Community College Research Center, 2015). The largest barrier for community college students in completing their bachelor degree was loss of credit upon transfer (Monaghan & Attewell, 2014).

While Illinois has many strengths in supporting student completion, including full-time public university six-year completion rates that are seven percentage points higher than the national average; rankings of first in the nation for in completion rates for part-time students and adult learners at public universities; and national rankings of third for full-time community college students completing bachelor degrees at 4-year colleges (Illinois Board of Higher Education, 2016), there is still opportunity for

growth and extended support. Within this monograph, several creative strategies were advanced that have implications for the larger field in the development of transfer pathways. These include:

- Provide creative completion pathways reflective of student goals and workforce opportunities.

- Deliver clear, stackable pathways that outline progression to goal attainment.

- Offer informed, intrusive, academic advising.

- Create sustainable transfer agreements.

- Include social supports.

Provide Creative Completion Pathways Reflective of Student Goals and Workforce Opportunities

Nationally, workforce development in ECE is constrained by limited articulation opportunities between associate and baccalaureate degree programs in the field of ECE, and very limited credit-bearing, community-based training and education opportunities (LeMoine, 2008). At the same time, the field is experiencing increased expectations for educational attainment, as well as greater occupational demand.

One of the most pressing challenges that exists in terms of transfer pathways is for AAS students. Traditionally, these students have taken far less general education coursework, adopting a path most likely to place them on a direct exit into their field of work, and making pursuit of a bachelor degree following the AAS a timely and costly process. Mathien et al. (2016), recognize the "context of an increasing demand for qualified, degreed early childhood professionals," and with that, the need to create flexible pathways based on the student's entry point. With this in mind, several monograph partnerships created AAS/BA articulation models (as noted in Latorre & Batchelor, 2016; Mathien et al., 2016; McIntryre, Thompson, King, Smith, & Toliver, 2016; Pruitt et al., 2016). Partnership design strategies included moving from a course-to-course articulation system to an exploration of whole program competencies (Mathien et al., 2016; Pruitt et al., 2016), as well as the creation of a summer bridge course

from community college to university program to support the development of additional targeted competencies (Latorre & Batchelor, 2016).

Within each of the partnerships outlined above, the question of where pathways aligned was closely explored. The field of early childhood has recognized the importance of the knowledge and skills acquired at the bachelor level for practitioners. This pathway is often conceptualized as a BA or BS with ISBE licensure. By recognizing that needed skills and competencies to support young children's development and learning can also be attained through pathways that do not lead to earning a teaching license within a public school setting (such as Child Development and Child and Family Studies programs), another viable pathway option for students leading to degree completion was explored and developed.

Main et al. (2016) recognized opportunities for strengthening preparation for work across each sector and community that served young children and their families. Within their partnership, pathways that led to early childhood professional educator licensure and occupations, most traditionally within public schools, was expanded to include a Human Development and Family Studies Curriculum, which included alignment to the Gateways Family Specialist Credential, and employment opportunities in sectors outside of public school systems.

Deliver Clear, Stackable Pathways That Outline Progression to Goal Attainment

As noted, transfer pathways between 2- and 4-year programs have been most commonly planned and implemented through general education transfer at the community college level, with more specialized venues of studying in one's chosen area of focus occurring at the 4-year level. While this model might be well suited for traditional students who are pursuing their education to then enter into their career of choice, it ignores the reality that many students are also currently working in the field in which they are pursuing education. For these students, attaining credentials en route to their ultimate completion goal could serve as a vital support in professional development and career attainment. As well, accessing courses in their area of study at the community college can reduce issues of cost.

Time to completion and loss of credit are two of the most pressing issues that interfere with goal attainment for community college transfer students (Monaghan & Attewell, 2014). Strategies designed to target these issues within this monograph included the development of stackable programs between 2- and 4-year institutions, where the infrastructure of the programs included shared language, objectives, and goals based on the Illinois Gateways credentialing system (Mathien et al., 2016). One model shared was the Chicago State-Morton College-South Suburban College partnership; they used the common framework of the Gateways credentialing system, aligned course assessments, and created pathways to non-licensure degree pathways (Steinhaus & Walker, 2016).

Many other creative strategies also had significant implications for the creation of clear, stackable pathways. In the Pruitt et al. (2016) partnership, the AAS programs of three community colleges were aligned with both a BA early childhood licensure program and a newly created non-licensure program. Similar approaches were used by Mathien et al. (2016) and McIntyre et al. (2016) building on existing licensure and non-licensure baccalaureate programs. These options created provided paths based on student goals and previous education. The summer bridge course for students in Southern Illinois added a component to community college programming that allowed the programs to stack needed knowledge and skills in community college studies prior to transfer, and in turn, provided a clear path for articulation and degree progression (Latorre & Batchelor, 2016).

Offer Informed, Intrusive, Academic Advising

Strong academic advising plays a significant role in student retention and persistence (Drake, 2011). Advisors within any field of study need to provide focused, specific, clear advice to support students in attaining their goals. Within the field of early childhood, the varied career pathways and educational requirements can be particularly confusing. As noted by Asimov et al. (2016), when considering transfer requirements through the lens of college faculty: "the wilderness of transfer requirements and university bureaucracy proved endlessly confusing and unpredictable to

us." It is concerning as reflected in the pilot study conducted by Donovan et al. (2016) referenced in this monograph, few campus recruiters, transfer specialists, and non-faculty advisors for potential and current ECE majors were aware of important, nuanced information needed to successfully guide students toward attaining their industry-based credentials and degrees.

Advisement strategies shared by partnerships included developing additional supports and tools for students and advisors, along with restructuring many of the advising functions within the program. For example, the Loyola-City Colleges partnership developed a recruitment pamphlet designed to inform City Colleges students of opportunities and requirements of their partnership program (Asimov et al., 2016). Chicago State, with its partners South Suburban and Morton Community College, developed transfer program maps (Steinhaus & Walker, 2016). One of the main goals of these maps was to reduce student credit loss in the transfer process.

Adopting individualized advising strategies designed to identify and support transfer students early in their community college experience, and then supporting students as they progressed through their program of study, was another important strategy shared (Asimov et al., 2016). This strategy was also used by University of Illinois at Chicago, Harold Washington, and Harry S. Truman Colleges. Espousing a strengths-based approach, this partnership saw academic advising as key to the retention and success of their students, and decided upon the use of an advising model that embraced reflective supervision. Key to this approach were building relationships and creating a safe environment for mutual active listening and thoughtful questioning (Main et al., 2016).

Include Social Supports

Moving from the community college to the university environment is a transition that faculty throughout the monograph identified as benefitting from both practical and social support. By providing mentors with specific competencies to support mentees, the Pruitt et al. (2016) partnership utilized a strategy that supported competency development as well as social support. Asimov et al. (2016) described the growth of Professional Learning Communities, where students from the City Colleges joined

with students from Loyola University, as allowing for opportunities to collaborate and form relationships long before community college students have transferred to the university. Faculty at the City Colleges and Loyola provided not only practical assistance to students considering transfer, but social support and the opportunity to develop social networks. Important components of the summer bridge program developed in Southern Illinois included community college student trips to the SIUE campus, introductions, tours of important entities, and opportunities to meet faculty members and other students who would be starting the program in the upcoming fall cohort (Latorre & Batchelor, 2016). Another strategy developed within a few partnerships included offering specific workshops that targeted a pedagogical need (such a literacy and math), and encouraged ECE students from partnering institutions as well as practitioners within the community to attend (Bressman et al., 2016; Smyrniotis et al., 2016). This strategy provided opportunities for relationships to develop with colleagues in the field and community.

The success, or failure, of processes established is often contingent on the functioning of the partnership which undertook the challenge. Therefore, exploration of strategies supporting partnership engagement is essential.

Partner Engagement

Building partnerships within and across institutions, as well as carefully developing relationships with potential employers and other community stakeholders, is essential in supporting student attainment of industry-based credentials and degrees. Relationships are the catalyst and initial glue that fosters pathway development and the formation of partnerships between institutions (Litchenberger, Klostermann, & Duffy, 2015). The heart of this monograph is about partnerships, and there are several strategies embedded that support strategic partnership development. These include:

- Identify shared ground.
- Formalize partnerships.

Identify Shared Ground

A key question, based on common needs and challenges, identified by Donovan et al. (2016), was "How could we not form a consortium to work on persistent issues in developing relevant ECE preparation programs?" As programs in higher education grapple with issues of supporting needed knowledge and skills, creating flexible pathways, and developing thriving programs that are responsive to workforce and student needs, partnership is essential.

Partnerships can take many forms, and each is integral to the vitality of the individual partnerships, the faculty within them, and the institutions and students served. From careful coordination of pedagogy that is responsive to community needs (Sanders-Smith & Gaumer, 2016; Smyrniotis et al., 2016), to formalizing strategies around partnerships, there are many levels and practices surrounding the act of engaging as partners. Shared ground and the identification of a foundation from which to build are essential to partnerships' generating solutions in a cohesive fashion.

Sanders-Smith and Gaumer (2016), for example, describe commonalities within the community, and shared cross-institutional histories as critical components of their partnerships success. This, coupled with their communities' investment in a specific pedagogy, became an essential framework. Smyrniotis et al. (2016) describe a similar process in their exploration of both pedagogy and institutional practices. Adopting a Community of Practice model, their partnership focused on developing a framework of joint exploration and application around key issues.

Formalize Partnerships

A recurring theme throughout the voices included in the monograph was the incredible importance of relationships coupled with the vital need to formalize agreements. While the state of Illinois does have an active Illinois Articulation Initiative, many of the partnerships described the desire to move beyond a course to course articulation. A fear centered on the lack of implementation of agreements rendered when staff changed. Several partnerships commented on the importance formalizing partnerships,

including Bezdicek et al. (2016), who saw the EPPI grant as an opportunity to develop a formalized plan around organically occurring activities, and Donovan et al. (2016), who used the EPPI grant opportunity to formalize transfer pathways based on their geographic region.

Conclusion

As higher education continues to explore challenges and opportunities related to student issues of access, affordability, and completion, it is instructive to examine and reflect on strategies that have been identified as effective. Within this monograph, a variety of approaches that shared common threads were identified. As well, unique strategies marked by notable differences based on geography and context were also advanced.

Several common themes emerged that are congruent with existing research, including the importance of clear, stackable pathways; targeted advisement based on opportunities and student goals; the need to clearly map pedagogy and experiences to workforce needs, and the importance of creating pathways and partnerships from a shared infrastructure.

Illinois is not unique in the challenges faced or solutions offered. However, each partnership, institution, faculty member, and student are experiencing these challenges and applying solutions within a context unique to them. One of the strengths of the EPPI grant initiative was the opportunity to apply and adapt research and evidence to each unique context, acknowledging rich intra-and inter-institutional complexities, as well as unique connections to the workforce context. The stories of partnership and success in this monograph, compiled, reinforced and advanced the evidence based on effective policy and practice supporting transfer and workforce development pathways within institutions of higher education.

References

American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. (2010). *The clinical preparation of teachers: A policy brief*. Retrieved from http://www.aacte.org

Asimov, J. G., Kennedy, A. S., & Lees, A. T. (2016). Beginning with yes: Reframing the narrative in teacher preparation to support community college transfer students in early childhood special education. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 26–45). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Bezdicek, J., Comuntzis Page, G., & Helm, J. (2016). Supporting change in the education of English language learners and young children in central Illinois. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 238–259). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Boswell, K. (2004). Bridges or barriers? Public policy and the community college transfer function. *Change, 36*(6), 22-29.

Bressman, S., Keneman, A., Lems, K., Stegemoller, J., Olson, M. A., & Rinchiuso, M. (2016). Transfer pathways beyond articulation: A partnership initiative between Nantional Louis University and Triton Community College. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 82–101). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Community College Research Center. (2015). *What we know about transfer*. Retrieved from http://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/Community-College-FAQs.html

Donovan, M. A., Steinhaus, P., Potenza, A., George, A., Bulat, C., Walker, D. (2016). When innovation means breaking the enrollment management mold: Building a postsecondary institution transfer network consortium. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 178–197). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Drake, J. K. (2011). The role of academic advising in student retention and persistence. *About Campus, 16*(3), 8-12.

Hawley, W. D., & Nieto, S. (2010). Another inconvenient truth: Race and ethnicity matter. *Educational Leadership, 68*(3), 66-71.

Heineke, A., Kennedy, A. S., & Lees, A. (2013). *Preparing early childhood professionals for the culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms and communities of Illinois*. Retrieved from http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v15n2/heineke.htm

Horn, L., & Skomsvold, P. (2011). *Community college student outcomes: 1994-2009.* Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Data Points: Illinois Higher Education is True to Its Mission. Available at: http://www.ibhe.org/DataPoints/Mission.pdf

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2016). *IBHE data points: National student clearinghouse snapshot report – Certificate and associate degree pathways*. Retrieved from http://www.ibhe.org/DataPoints/NSCSnapshot2016.pdf

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation.* Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. doi:10.17226/19401

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

Latorre, M., & Batchelor, M. (2016). Providing a pathway to degree completion for child care associates in rural southern Illinois. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 66–81). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

LeMoine, S. (2008). *Workforce designs: A policy blueprint for state early childhood professional development systems*. NAEYC Public Policy Report. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Lichtenberger, E. J., Klostermann, B. K., & Duffy, D. Q. (2015). *The early childhood educator preparation grant: Lessons from initial implementation* (IERC 2015-2). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

Klostermann, B. K. (2010). *Examining the Chicago early childhood teacher pipeline* (IERC 2010-1). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council.

Main, C., Asimow, J. G., & Connor, K. (2016). Refine, refocus, and renew: Early childhood preparation pathways in Chicago. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 260–279). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Mathien, T., Nepstad, C., Potenza A., Kim. J., & Mertes, W. (2016). Building on trust: How three institutions came together to create an innovative partnership for student transfer. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 102–121). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education

McIntyre, C., Thompson, S. D., King, D., Smith, R., & Toliver, M. (2016). Career pathways in early childhood in rural communities. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 224–237). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Moll, L. C., & González, N. (2004). Engaging life: A funds of knowledge approach to multicultural education. *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, 2, 699-715.

Monaghan, D., & Attewell, P. (2014). *Academic momentum at the gate: Does first-semester credit load affect postsecondary completion.* Retrieved from core. ac.uk/display/27300158

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2015). *Snapshot report: Contribution of two-year institutions to four-year completions.* Retrieved from https://nscresearchcenter.org/tag/2-yr-completion/

Pruitt, R., Diez, C., Livesey, K., & Szymczak, M. (2016). Shifting the balance: Re-envisioning early childhood education preparation design through meaningful collaboration. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 144–161). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Ray, A., Bowman, B., & Robbins, J. (2006). *Preparing early childhood teachers to successfully educate all children: The contribution of state boards of higher education and national professional accreditation organizations.* Chicago, IL: Erikson Institute. Retrieved from http://www.fcd-us.org/sites/default/ les/ContributionsofStateBoards.pdf

Sanden, S., Darragh Ernst, J. C., Hamann, K., Quesenberry, A., Latham, N. I., Christianson, D., & Smyrniotis, A. (2016). Supporting early childhood workforce development and pathways: Developing a competency-based assessment system in Illinois. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 200–223). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Sanders-Smith, S. C., & Gaumer, N. (2016). Working together to support math pedagogy: It all adds up for students. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 162–177). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Smyrniotis, A., Nugent, P., Lee, H., Arquette, C. M., Wolffe, R., Bussan, B., & Antola Crowe, H. (2016). Collaborative power: An inter-institutional community partnership. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 124–143). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Steinhaus, P., & Walker, D. (2016). Cross-institutional advising and curriculum agreements: Supports for transfer and degree completion in early childhood programs. In S. A. Bernoteit, J. C. Darragh Ernst, & N. I. Latham, (Eds.), *Voices from the field: Collaborative innovations in early childhood educator preparation* (pp. 46–65). Edwardsville, IL: Illinois Education Research Council; Springfield, IL: Illinois Board of Higher Education.

U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *Affordability, accessibility and accountability in higher education*. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/cclo/ccvirtualsummitsummary.pdf

Contributors

Heljä Antola Crowe, PhD
Bradley University
Peoria, Illinois

Cecile M. Arquette, PhD
Bradley University
Peoria, Illinois

Jennifer G. Asimow, MEd
Harold Washington College
Chicago, Illinois

Melissa Batchelor, EdD
Lewis & Clark Community College
Godfrey, Illinois

Stephanie A. Bernoteit, EdD
Illinois Board of Higher Education
Springfield, Illinois

Joyce Bezdicek, PhD
Millikin University
Decatur, Illinois

Sherri Bressman, EdD
National Louis University
Skokie, Illinois

Cheryl Bulat, MA
Morton College
Peoria, Illinois

Beth Bussan, EdD
Bradley University
Peoria, Illinois

Diane Christianson, MS
Illinois Valley Community College
Oglesby, Illinois

Georgette Comuntzis Page, PhD
Millikin University
Decatur, Illinois

Kate Connor, MS
Harry S. Truman College
Chicago, Illinois

Johnna C. Darragh Ernst, PhD
Heartland Community College
Normal, Illinois

Carla Diez, MS
Waubonsee Community College
Sugar Grove, Illinois

Marie Ann Donovan, EdD
DePaul University
Chicago, Illinois

Nancy Gaumer, MEd
Parkland College
Champaign, Illinois

Anne George, PhD
St. Xavier University
Chicago, Illinois

Kira Hamann, MS
Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois

Jeanne Helm, MS
Richland Community College
Decatur, Illinois

Ayn Keneman, EdD
National Louis University
Skokie, Illinois

Adam S. Kennedy, PhD
Loyola University Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Jin-ah Kim, EdD
Roosevelt University
Chicago, Illinois

Diane King, EdD
Southeastern Illinois College
Harrisburg, Illinois

Nancy I. Latham, EdD
Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois

Martha Latorre, PhD
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Edwardsville, Illinois

Hwa Lee, PhD
Bradley University
Peoria, Illinois

Anna T. Lees, EdD
Western Washington University
Bellingham, Washington

Kristin Lems, EdD
National Louis University
Skokie, Illinois

Kari Livesey, MS
Kankakee Junior College
Kankakee, Illinois

Catherine Main, MEd
University of Illinois at Chicago
Chicago, Illinois

Tara Mathien, EdD
Harper College
Palatine, Illinois

Christie McIntyre, PhD
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Carbondale, Illinois

Wendy Mertes, MEd
Harper College
Palatine, Illinois

Carrie Nepstad, MS
Harold Washington College
Chicago, Illinois

Patricia Nugent, PhD
Bradley University
Peoria, Illinois

Mary Ann Olson, MA
Triton College
River Grove, Illinois

Antonia Potenza, PhD
Roosevelt University
Chicago, Illinois

Rebecca Pruitt, PhD
Lewis University
Romeoville, Illinois

Amanda Quesenberry, PhD
Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois

Mary Rinchiuso, MEd
Triton College
River Grove, Illinois

Sherry Sanden, PhD
Illinois State University
Normal, Illinois

Stephanie C. Sanders-Smith, PhD
University of Illinois
Urbana-Champaign
Champaign, Illinois

Ruth Smith, MEd
Shawnee Community College
Ullin, Illinois

Andrianna Smyrniotis, MA
Illinois Central College
East Peoria, Illinois

Jason Stegemoller, PhD
National Louis University
Skokie, Illinois

Patricia Steinhaus, PhD
Chicago State University
Chicago, Illinois

Melissa Szymczak, MEd
Joliet Junior College
Joliet, Illinois

Stacy D. Thompson, PhD
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Carbondale, Illinois

Marilyn Toliver, PhD
John A. Logan College
Carterville, Illinois

Donna Walker, EdD
South Suburban College
South Holland, Illinois

Robert Wolffe, EdD
Bradley University
Peoria, Illinois

Index of Key Words

This monograph presents the perspectives of Illinois higher education faculty in early childhood educator preparation programs, 2014-2016, as they navigated a variety of changing state and national contexts to create partnerships and programs to support the education and credentialing of the state's early childhood workforce. The authors' collective voices provide important insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with designing and implementing programs for early childhood education (ECE) students, many of whom are working professionals in the field, with the goal of providing flexible pathways that support attainment of industry-recognized credentials aligned with associate and baccalaureate degrees. While instructive for the early childhood field itself, this monograph illustrates important lessons and promising strategies that may also promote degree and credential attainment for the broader arena of higher education.

ILLINOIS EDUCATION
RESEARCH COUNCIL

http://ierc.education

Illinois Board
of Higher Education

http://www.ibhe.org