

The Director's Link

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As the early childhood field continues to evolve and improve the quality of services available to children and families, there is a growing understanding that the needs of each child must be met in order to achieve the desired outcomes for all children. At the national and state level, early childhood leaders committed to providing high-quality services struggle with integrating the concepts of linguistic and cultural diversity into the broader definition of high quality. At the local level, early care and education programs are increasingly concerned with implementing practices that ensure linguistically and culturally appropriate services for all the children they serve.

Whether in policy or practice, building systems and services that reflect diversity is a complex and fluid process. While there is often a willingness to incorporate terms like *developing cultural competency* and *serving English language learners* into programmatic goals, breathing life into those words is considerably more arduous. Meeting these needs requires program transformation, not merely tweaks in policies and procedures.

Who Needs to Address Diversity?

The short answer is: everyone. Diversity issues are relevant in all early childhood settings, whether school-, center-, or home-based, and whether publicly or privately funded. Directors should not be limited by the provisions in law which generally set the minimum level of compliance for services. As far as best practices go, the sky is the limit! Programs should be encouraged to exceed the diversity minimums established in law and public policy.

Furthermore, the demographics are clear—linguistic, racial, and ethnic diversity is everywhere. English language learners, and immigrants are not only found in big cities

but also in rural areas. Over the past ten years, these populations have moved into new communities, making diversity everyone's issue.

Who Are English Language Learners?

The term *English language learners* (ELLs) is one of many terms referring to children who have a language other than English spoken in the home. ELLs are linguistically distinct from other children primarily because, in addition to learning English, they have also been exposed to another language. Education systems may classify some ELL students as *limited English proficient* (LEP) if they are determined to lack sufficient English proficiency. LEP status is determined by assessing only English proficiency, ignoring the home language. However, the impact of the home language on a child is significant and worth considering irrespective of the child's proficiency in English.

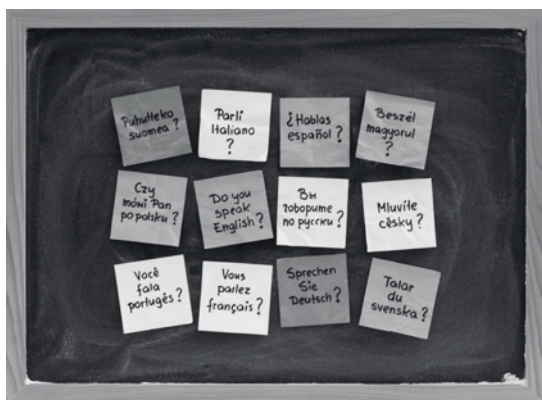
English language learners are often, but not always, children of immigrants. According to a 2010 survey conducted by the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 23% of children nationally have at least one foreign-born parent and one out of five children is considered to be limited English proficient upon entering kindergarten. In Illinois, approximately 80% of all ELLs are Spanish-speaking, with the remainder representing over 130 languages.

Transforming for Diversity

Tinkering at the edge of change is not enough. Program administrators need to implement broad systemic changes within their organizations to be fully responsive to the linguistic and cultural diversity of the children and families in their programs and community. This requires a willingness to make changes in program structures, processes, and people.

Transforming for Diversity

By Reyna P. Hernandez



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Pathway of Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is essentially the capacity to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. In early education, it is important to deliver a culturally relevant education that supports all children and families. In order to deliver such an education, it is beneficial to interact effectively with individuals and groups of different cultures with awareness, knowledge, and skills relating to different racial and ethnic groups. Instead of thinking about cultural competency as a destination, directors should think about it as a developing skill set—a pathway along which they should lead their staff.

Outreach Matters

Studies show that children with foreign-born parents are enrolled in center-based early childhood programs at lower rates than other children. Foreign-born parents may not be familiar with specific programs or eligibility requirements. Outreach should inform potential clients about the services a center offers without presuming that they already understand these specific programs. Providing information in the languages present in the center's service area can help reduce language barriers. Building trust is also important. For many Latino parents, trust is one of the leading considerations when deciding where to send their young children. Partnerships with already-trusted community entities, such as faith-based or community-based organizations, can help build that trust.

Beyond Translation

Language development in both English and in the home language is deeply intertwined with other areas of a child's development. Children may have pre-literacy skills and social skills in the home language, as well as in English. From screening to curriculum, addressing a child's home language should be integrated into every aspect of the program. The home language can be considered a tool for accessing relationships at home and within communities. Hiring bilingual staff facilitates communication with children and their families. Some centers use liaisons or teaching assistants to translate for children and parents. Translation assists with communication; however, translation is not enough. It is important that knowledge of second language development be integrated into the program of instruction.

Building the Workforce

One of the greatest challenges for early childhood centers seeking to meet the language needs of their ELLs is in developing and recruiting staff. Professional development resources specific to young English language learners are limited, but growing quickly. Ideally, all early childhood professional development programs would integrate the specific needs of ELLs into the curriculum, and dedicate time to building knowledge and practical experience implementing ELL strategies.

Developing linguistic and cultural competency is a journey, not a destination.

In the absence of fully integrated programs, center directors can make sure that at least those individuals working directly with English language learners receive professional development specific to this interaction. Keep in mind that all staff can benefit from this type of professional development—strategies that are good for ELLs are generally beneficial for all children. In recruiting, directors can prioritize hiring staff who are bilingual or with specialized training in both early childhood education and English as a second language.

A Final Thought

Linguistic and cultural diversity impacts many aspects of a program. Issues of parent engagement, program eligibility based on immigration status, and identification and assessment of children are equally important. Remember, developing linguistic and cultural competency is a journey, not a destination. Like all journeys, the process begins with a single step, and continues through a commitment to life-long learning and periodic self-evaluation.

Reyna Paz Hernandez, Research and Policy Associate at the Latino Policy Forum, has many years experience working on issues impacting the Latino community. She holds an A.B. in Government from Harvard University and a J.D. from New York Law School. She is the author of Transforming Early Learning: Educational Equity for Young Latinos.

The Latino Policy Forum is a public policy and advocacy organization working to improve educational outcomes for children, make housing accessible and affordable, promoting just immigration reform, and building the influence and leadership of the Latino community.

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Our Mission

The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership is dedicated to enhancing the management skills, professional orientation, and leadership capacity of early childhood administrators. The activities of the Center encompass four areas: training and technical assistance, program evaluation, research, and public awareness.

<http://cecl.nl.edu>



Strategies for Supporting Diversity

Transforming your program to support cultural and linguistic diversity begins with program evaluation. These questions are designed to guide your reflection. Use this tool with your staff to build awareness and responsiveness to the diversity within your community.

Learn about the families you serve

- Survey families to learn about their home language as well as cultural and family practices
- Develop strategies to learn about the children and their families—such as family portfolios or heritage maps and structured family time

Reach out to hard-to-reach families

- Conduct outreach in the home language
- Provide one-on-one contact with families
- Implement grassroots efforts to connect with the local community
- Partner with other social services providers
- Communicate the importance of early childhood education programs
- Clarify eligibility and cost requirements through outreach

Identify and screen English language learners

- Screen children in their native language
- Implement comprehensive and individualized screening procedures
- Provide referrals whenever possible

Provide culturally relevant education

- Become familiar with the family's background and culture
- Choose appropriate and flexible curricula
- Nurture the native language
- Develop strong child-family-school relationships

Develop linguistically and culturally competent early childhood professionals

- Make hiring bilingual staff a priority
- Recruit and train teachers from the local community
- Provide incentives for staff development
- Link teachers to professional development options and other resources
- Incorporate practical applications of relevant research

Integrate parents into the learning process

- Provide a welcoming parent orientation
- Implement an open-door policy
- Communicate in two languages
- Offer parent training opportunities and adult education services
- Encourage active parent leadership

Ease the transition into kindergarten

- Provide parents with a comprehensive transition plan for each child
- Partner with the school receiving the children

These strategies are taken from the Latino Policy Forum report *Transforming Early Learning*. For the full report and additional resources, visit www.LatinoPolicyForum.org.

Planning Ahead

Professional Development Opportunities

Fall Management Institute—Preventing Legal Issues from Flaring Up

October 14–15, 2011



Early childhood administrators make decisions with legal ramifications daily. Few are trained as attorneys, however, and not many can afford a lawyer on retainer. Learn how to prevent legal issues in the workplace related to hiring, firing, ADA, staff babysitting, privacy in cyberspace, and more. This two-day institute will address common legal hotspots through an engaging, true-to-life case study approach.

- Learn the guiding principles to use in making decisions with potential legal ramifications (e.g., due process, documentation, consistency)
- Practice preventative approaches and policies through case study discussion of everyday situations.
- Learn how to update staff and parent handbooks with best practice policies.

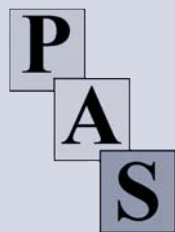
Attorney Holly Elissa Bruno, author of *Leading on Purpose: Emotionally Intelligent Early Childhood Administration*, and online radio host of *Heart to Heart Conversations* will lead this institute. She will accompany you through an inspiring, hands-on, interactive search for solutions to the most challenging issues you face.

Location: McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee: \$199 includes texts, materials, and meals (breakfast and lunch)

Program Administration Scale—Assessor Reliability Training

October 18–21, 2011



The *Program Administration Scale* (PAS) measures leadership and management practices of center-based early care and education programs. Assessor Reliability Training includes an overview of the instrument, how to rate indicators and score items, the protocol for interviewing and collecting data, and procedures for verifying documentation. Individuals who successfully complete the training are eligible to become certified PAS assessors. This four-day training is designed for technical assistance specialists, quality monitors, management consultants, researchers, and other professionals interested in using the PAS to reliably assess early childhood leadership and management practices.

Location: McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex

Fee: \$1,025 includes all texts, materials, and meals

Playing It Safe in the Digital Age

October 19, 2011



Computers, smart phones, e-mail, and social media may make our lives easier, but they also make our programs vulnerable to a host of new problems. In this session we'll consider some of the issues associated with operating an early childhood program in the digital age. You'll learn ways to protect yourself and others online. Learn options for keeping your data safe and how to avoid online scams, viruses, and malware. Practice setting permissions in social networking sites like Facebook to keep personal information private. Discuss how digital devices impact your staff and families and learn strategies to bring your program's policies and procedures up to speed with the digital age. No past social networking or advanced computer skills required.

Location: YWCA of Rockford, Puri Family Computer Lab, Rockford, IL

Fee: \$45, Lunch will be provided.

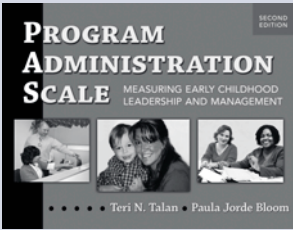
This session is co-sponsored by the YWCA of Rockford.

For more information, contact: Debra Trude-Suter debra.trudesuter@nl.edu 847-947-5056

Program Administration Scale Measuring Early Childhood Leadership and Management

**2nd
Edition**

Teri N. Talan and Paula Jorde Bloom



The McCormick Center is pleased to announce the release of the second edition of the *Program Administration Scale* (PAS). Written by National Louis University professors Drs. Teri Talan and Paula Jorde Bloom, the PAS is designed to reliably measure and improve the leadership and management practices of center-based programs—the only instrument of its kind to focus exclusively on organization-wide administrative issues.

The second edition includes updated national norms, a summary of research using the PAS, and minor refinements to support the reliable use of the instrument and to reflect current best practices in early childhood administration.

- The Notes and Guiding Questions sections have been expanded to increase understanding and facilitate greater consistency in rating indicators.
- More emphasis is placed on administrative practices that support family partnership, inclusion, cultural sensitivity, and linguistic diversity.
- Leadership routines that provide opportunities for distributed leadership among staff are measured.
- The Technology Subscale focuses on technological practices that promote effective communication, collaboration, and continuous learning.

ISBN 978-0-8077-5245-6, 90 pages, soft cover, \$22. Available from Teachers College Press (www.tcpress.com) and New Horizons (www.newhorizonsbooks.net).

Training Modules for Inclusive Child Care



Easter Seals has recently released a new resource to help center directors create programs that promote the inclusion of children with special needs. The *Training Modules for Inclusive Child Care* curriculum focuses on strategies for successfully including young children with disabilities in early childhood environments. The training program includes five separate modules, each offered as a self-guided course that takes about an hour to complete. The modules are designed for anyone who works in an early childhood program.

Each module focuses on a particular content area and provides classroom strategies for early childhood practitioners as well as a list of resources for providers and parents. Topics include: An introduction to inclusive child care; Challenging behavior; Communication delays; Autism; and Physical disabilities. The training program includes presentation outlines, handouts, learning activities, and PowerPoint slides.

Available for \$30 per module. For more information, contact Bob Siegel, bsiegel@easterseals.com

Learn More about Young English Language Learners

- *Challenging Common Myths about Young English Language Learners*, Foundation for Child Development, January 2007
- *Key Demographics and Practice Recommendations for Young English Learners*, NCELA, January 2011
- *Quality Benchmark for Cultural Competence Project*, NAEYC, July 2009
- *Dual Language Learners in the Early Years: Getting Ready to Succeed in School*, National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, November 2008
- Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center: Dual Language Learners <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic>
- Latino Policy Forum <http://www.latinopolicyforum.org/programs/early-childhood-education/early-childhood-education-reports.aspx>

Thanks for making the 11th Leadership Connections Conference such a great success!

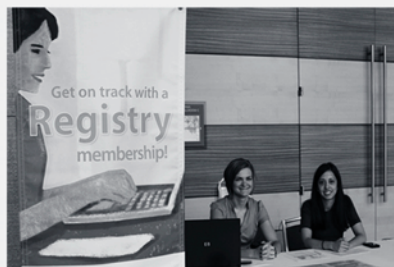
Alive with the energy of 500 enthusiastic early childhood leaders and guests, the Westin Chicago North Shore was the site of the eleventh annual Leadership Connections conference. Thanks to all of the presenters and participants who made this year's conference such an invigorating event. A special thank you to our sponsors for their generous support:

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Joyce Foundation
Kaplan Early Learning Company
Lakeshore Learning Materials
McCormick Foundation
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Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Join us in 2012 for another great conference: May 10-12, 2012. Registration will be available in October 2011. For more information about exhibitor or sponsorship opportunities, contact Donna Jonas at 800-443-5522, ext. 5058 or donna.jonas@nl.edu.



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