The seal of National-Louis University is a circular emblem. It features a central shield with a cross and a book. Above the shield is a banner with the word 'SAPIENTIA' and below it is 'TEMPERANTIA'. The shield is flanked by two figures. The outer ring of the seal contains the text 'NATIONAL-LOUIS UNIVERSITY' and the year '1886' at the bottom.

# The Director's Link

Published by the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National-Louis University

Winter 2008

## Help Wanted: Mentors

Shirley Flath

### HELP WANTED

Dedicated professionals  
who are eager for  
new challenges.  
Successful candidates  
will empower others in  
positive growth and reap  
personal satisfaction  
beyond measure.

**A**re you interested in this position? If you are, you'll join the ranks of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Alexander the Great. History and legend tell of princes and kings who had mentors. The original Mentor is a character in Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. When Odysseus, King of Ithaca, went to fight in the Trojan War, he entrusted the care of his kingdom to Mentor. Mentor served as the teacher and overseer of Odysseus' son, Telemachus.

### What is a Mentor?

Today, mentors share their expertise with less-experienced workers to help them advance their careers, enhance their education, and expand their network of resources and support. Mentors are common in business, politics, acting, and sports. Mentoring is a basic form of human capital exchange with one person investing time, energy, and personal know-how in order to assist in the growth and development of another person.

The term mentor is used both formally and informally in different organizations to connote individuals who support and advise others professionally. Definitions of mentor include a wise and trusted counselor, teacher, coach, guide, and advisor. In early childhood organizations mentors are usually master teachers who have worked in the field for several years,

skilled in their craft, knowledgeable about current trends in the field, and good at problem solving.

### Why Have Mentors?

Mentors can play a vital role in early childhood programs, particularly in orienting new teachers, ensuring staff stability, and increasing program quality.

Mentors help new teachers feel welcomed. Teaching is one of the few professions where the novice is expected to assume full responsibility from the first day of the job. Mentors can smooth early childhood teachers' transitions into new jobs. By assisting with staff orientation, they can help ensure that new teachers understand the culture of the program and the full range of responsibilities expected of them.

Our knowledge and experience tell us that children make greater social and academic gains when their teachers, families, and administrative staff have formed a community based on care, trust, and respect. Mentoring programs are one way to help new teachers feel supported and immediately part of the center's community.

Mentors help ensure staff stability. The challenge of finding and keeping good teachers continues as one of tallest obstacles standing in the way of sustained high quality in early childhood settings. When children lose a significant adult in their school life it can have a real and lasting impact on the classroom social and emotional climate. Teachers who have mentors feel more connected to the school community and are less likely to leave the program.

*Continued on page 2*

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Turnover costs time and money. First, there is the administrative time spent in interviewing and screening candidates. This time could otherwise be dedicated to activities to support teaching practices. Then there are the recruiting costs of advertising, processing applications, conducting background checks, and required medical tests. There are also hidden costs to turnover, not paid with dollars, but at the expense of program quality. Turnover, especially among new teachers, can be reduced significantly through arrangements that support teacher mentoring.

Mentors help improve the quality of teaching practices. Early childhood programs are subject to increasingly greater accountability and expectations for staff qualifications. The pressures on classroom teachers have never been greater. Accumulating evidence from the field suggests that teachers who have a mentor feel more confident and competent in their teaching and caregiving roles. When teachers feel confident and competent, they are more satisfied and fulfilled professionally. They are also more likely to pursue additional training to expand and build their expertise. Good mentors can help implement an individualized professional development plan for their mentee teachers. Helping

teachers chart goals, measure progress, and celebrate successes are just some ways mentors can support teachers in expanding professional competence.

### Types of Mentor Relationships

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for establishing a mentoring program. Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal, short-term or long-term. A mentor program could be set up as a highly structured, short-term relationship where a new employee is paired with a seasoned employee for an orientation. It could also be a long-term relationship and include helping a new hire learn all the necessary skills and requirements of the job or the organization.

In an informal, short-term relationship, a designated person can give periodic counsel to a teacher struggling with a specific issue such as a child with challenging behavior. In an informal, long-term relationship, the mentor could be available as needed to discuss problems, listen, or share special knowledge to support the teacher.

### Determining the Right Fit

Determining the right fit between mentor and mentee is crucial to the success of any mentoring program. A consideration of each person's learning style,

*Continued on next page*

### What Makes an Effective Mentoring Relationship?

The success of any mentor program rests on the relationship developed between the mentor and the mentee. Before the relationship begins, it is important that agreed-upon ground rules are established.

#### The mentor agrees to:

- be available to his or her mentee
- keep everything that occurs in the mentoring relationship confidential
- help, support, and encourage the mentee to set goals and develop a plan to reach those goals
- share knowledge and skills but refrain from giving advice
- be accepting and respectful
- work with the mentee to solve problems
- keep appointments

#### The mentee agrees to:

- be motivated and willing to learn
- be open to suggestions and feedback
- be honest in self-assessments
- be willing to set goals and do the work needed to attain those goals
- be willing to make mistakes
- work collaboratively with the mentor to solve problems
- keep appointments

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Address corrections should be directed to:

### McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership

6310 Capitol Drive  
Wheeling, Illinois 60090

#### Phone

(800) 443-5522, ext. 5056

#### Fax

(847) 465-5910

#### E-mail

cecl@nl.edu

#### Web Site

<http://cecl.nl.edu>

### Michael W. Louis Endowed Chair

Paula Jorde Bloom  
paula.bloom@nl.edu

### Faculty and Staff

Carmen Adamczyk	Robyn Kelton
Jill Bella	Heather Knapp
Lisa Boggess	Kara Lehnhardt
Linda Butkovich	Leslie Norman
Melissa Casteel	Liliam Perez
Douglas Clark	Kathleen Radice
Eileen Eisenberg	Kathleen Rousseau
Shirley Flath	Paula Steffen
Lila Goldston	Teri Talan
Ann Hentschel	Debra Trude-Suter
Donna Jonas	Barbara Volpe
Janis Jones	Tim Walker

### Director's Link

Editor	Douglas Clark douglas.clark@nl.edu
Layout	Burkat Design

### Advisory Board

Kay Albrecht	Ed Greene
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### Our Mission

The McCormick Tribune 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, technical assistance, research, and public awareness.

<http://cecl.nl.edu>



# The Director's Toolbox

## Using Mentors for New Teacher Orientation

*Mentors can play many valuable roles in orienting and supporting new teachers. The benefits of mentoring go beyond the immediate acquisition of knowledge and skills for the new teacher: It helps both the new teacher and the experienced teacher grow. What could be better than having an experienced teacher take a personal interest in a new teacher's success?*

### Consider using mentors to facilitate parts of the orientation process such as:

- Demonstrating teaching strategies
- Modeling strategies for planning and conducting parent conferences
- Viewing and discussing training videos
- Conducting peer evaluations
- Assisting with the design of new teachers' individualized professional development plans



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communication style, cultural and linguistic background, interests, needs, and expectations is essential.

Determining the right fit also depends on the mentor's time and resources and level of support and assistance needed by the mentee. If a mentee's needs are great and the mentor's resources, time, and skills are limited, it may be necessary to find a different person or way to support the mentee. If the mentee's needs are great and the mentor's resources are abundant, the potential exists for an intense and productive relationship.

If the mentor's resources and mentee's needs are both low, a short-term intervention may be adequate and satisfying to both parties. If the mentor's resources are substantial but the mentee's needs are low, then occasional help may be all that is needed, and the mentor may have time and talent available for helping others.

### A Successful Scenario

Rochelle, a seasoned teacher with 12 years experience, serves as mentor to first-year teacher Carmen. Rochelle checks in with Carmen in the morning and again in the afternoon to answer questions and share ideas drawn from her observations. After school Rochelle helps Carmen plan lessons, complete required paperwork, and prepare for an upcoming parent conference.

Occasionally a substitute teacher is called in to free Carmen to observe in Rochelle's classroom, observe in other classrooms, or attend an in-service event. After every observation or staff development event, Carmen debriefs with Rochelle. Serving as Carmen's guide, Rochelle helps her master the nuances of policies and procedures in the agency and cultivate open and authentic relationships with her peers and the parents in the program.

### Consider Being a Mentor

Being an effective mentor requires a genuine interest in another person's professional growth. You won't win many accolades, but you will be rewarded by the satisfaction of having done an important job.

And what is it that calls individuals to become mentors? The answers are as many as the number of mentors and mentees. Some were fortunate enough to have had a mentor and want to return the favor by supporting a relative newcomer to a practice. Others just want to be a positive influence or give back to their profession or community. Whatever your motivation is for becoming a mentor, you will find great fulfillment by sharing your experience to support others.

*Shirley Flath is a Training and Technical Assistance Specialist at the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership*

# Planning Ahead

## Professional Development Opportunities

### Supporting Directors as the Gatekeepers to Quality

February 11-14 and May 21-22, 2008

This special training opportunity is designed for college instructors, directors of multi-site programs, education coordinators, independent consultants, and resource and referral specialists. It provides an in-depth understanding on how to use the *Program Administration Scale* (PAS) to help directors of center-based programs prepare for Illinois Quality Counts: Quality Rating System.

Funded by the Grand Victoria Foundation, the goal of this initiative is to create a cadre of experienced program consultants who can provide technical assistance to center directors interested in applying for star levels three and four in the Illinois Quality Rating System and implementing suggested program improvements resulting from their PAS assessment. This training opportunity is limited to 15 participants. The application deadline is **January 11, 2008**

**Location:** McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership  
National-Louis University  
Wheeling campus annex

**Fee:** \$150, includes texts, materials, meals, and PAS assessor certification fee

*Participants may receive two semester hours of graduate credit (ECE582C, Early Childhood Program Evaluation) by paying an additional fee.*

### Family Child Care Institute—Program Quality Evaluation

February 29 - March 1 and May 17, 2008

Funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), this institute provides an introduction to program evaluation, stressing the importance of ongoing assessment to improve program quality and practices. As a participant, you will be introduced to the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised to assess the learning environment as well as other measures to assess the quality of business practices, parent satisfaction, and community responsiveness. In addition, you will learn about the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Quality Standards for Accreditation and how to begin the self-study process for accreditation.

For participants applying to Illinois Quality Counts: Quality Rating System, this institute meets the requirements for the "Introduction to the ERS" and "Getting Ready for the BAS" training.

**Fee:** \$100, includes texts, materials, and meals (breakfast and lunch)

The institute will be conducted over three days. Training for the first two days will be held at the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership in Wheeling, Illinois. The final day will be held in conjunction with the Center's Leadership Connections conference held at the Westin Hotel in Wheeling.

*Participants may receive two semester hours of graduate credit (ECE582C, Early Childhood Program Evaluation) by paying an additional fee, completing a project, and engaging in an online discussion about family child care.*

**For more information, contact Debra Trude-Suter at (800) 443-5522, ext. 5056 or [debra.trudesuter@nl.edu](mailto:debra.trudesuter@nl.edu).**

## NLU Courses for Directors

Spring term begins April 7, 2008

### Online Courses for Early Childhood Administrators

EPS500A: (3 sh) Human Development with a Focus on Early Childhood

ECE 518: (3 sh) Policies and Practices in Infant-Toddler Care

**For more information about the Early Childhood Administration degree program, contact Douglas Clark at [douglas.clark@nl.edu](mailto:douglas.clark@nl.edu) or (800) 443-5522, ext. 5062**

## Computer Training for Early Childhood Administrators—Intermediate Course



May 30 and June 6, 13, 20, 2008  
8:30am -12:30pm each day

Administering an effective and efficient early childhood program requires expertise in technology. Let us help you improve your computer skills and integrate technology into the management of your child care program. This intermediate course, funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), consists of four hands-on training sessions as well as additional content and activities delivered online. For Illinois Director Credential (IDC) purposes, this training equals 28 contact hours or two IDC management competency points. Enrollment is limited and priority will be given to administrators whose programs serve IDHS-funded children.

**Location:** National-Louis University  
North Shore campus,  
Skokie, IL

**Fee:** \$75, includes text and all course materials

**For more details check our technology training brochure, or log on to <http://cecl.nl.edu>**

## "Opening Minds"

### Join us at the Chicago Metro AEYC Conference

January 24-26, 2008

Hyatt Regency

McCormick Place

Please visit us at booth #716  
in the exhibition hall



## Take Time Out to Chat with the Experts Online in 2008!

The McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership hosts nationally renowned early childhood experts on its Web site. Join the discussion to chat with the people who have written the books and helped shape early childhood policy and practice. Each expert will be the featured guest for a week-long open discussion on issues of interest to early childhood center administrators.



**Monday, February 18 - Saturday, February 23, 2008**

Guest expert: Karen Stephens  
Director, Illinois State University Child Center  
*Program Communication Strategies: Reaching Out to Families and the Community*

**Monday, March 3 - Saturday, March 8, 2008**

Guest expert: Kathy Modigliani  
Director, Family Child Care Project  
*Family Child Care: Providing Program Quality Everyday*



**Monday, April 7 - Saturday, April 12, 2008**

Guest expert: Chip Donohue  
Director, Center for Early Childhood Professional Development & Leadership,  
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
*Conversations on Teacher Education: Global Perspectives*

Check out the Center's Web site (<http://cecl.nl.edu>) for information about how to log on and updates about future online guests.

## Half-Day Technology Workshops

Improve your computer skills and integrate technology into the management of your child care program.

### **Learning the Essentials of Web Design**

March 5, 2008

Black Hawk College Outreach Center, Moline, IL

Begin the process of creating a Web presence for your program. Learn the basics of HTML, Web authoring tools, graphics, and design principles that you can immediately put to use.

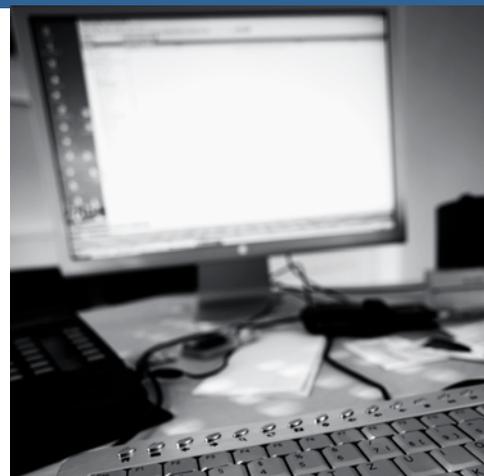
### **Exploring the World of Digital Photography**

April, 23, 2008

John A. Logan College, Carterville, IL

Learn about pixels and image sizes; capturing, storing, and sharing images; editing images; and displaying your images in marketing and promotional materials.

*Each workshop will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Participants' portion of the training cost is only \$35. Participants will receive a certificate of attendance. For more information, contact Debra Trude-Suter at (800) 443-5522, ext. 5056 or [debra.trudesuter@nl.edu](mailto:debra.trudesuter@nl.edu).*



**Space is limited – Sign up soon!**

# LEADERSHIP Connections

## ***New Date and Location!***

***May 14-17, 2008***

**The Westin Chicago North Shore  
601 N. Milwaukee Avenue  
Wheeling, IL 60090**

The Westin Chicago North Shore is located at Lake-Cook Road and Milwaukee Avenue, just 15 short miles north of O'Hare International Airport.

Our new conference home features:

- Modern spacious meeting rooms and accommodations
- Easy accessibility from major highways
- Free shuttle bus to/from public transportation
- Beautiful forest preserve views and walking paths



## *Happy New Year from the Faculty and Staff*

*The faculty and staff of the  
McCormick Tribune Center for Early  
Childhood Leadership*

*Front row left to right:*

Lisa Boggess, Melissa Casteel,  
Paula Jorde Bloom, Janis Jones,  
Barbara Volpe, and Robyn Kelton.

*Back row left to right:*

Donna Jonas, Jill Bella, Debra  
Trude-Suter, Teri Talan, Shirley  
Flath, Lila Goldston, Kathleen  
Rousseau, Douglas Clark,  
Kathleen Radice, Ann Hentschel,  
Carmen Adamczyk, Tim Walker,  
Paula Steffen, Kara ehnhardt,  
Liliam Perez, and Linda Butkovich.

*Not pictured:*

Eileen Eisenberg, Heather Knapp,  
and Leslie Norman.

