

The Director's Link

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The Status of the Early Childhood Workforce in Illinois

A new study of the early childhood workforce in Illinois finds that the education level for lead teachers in community-based programs has dramatically increased over the past seven years. The study, *Who's Caring for the Kids?*, was conducted by faculty at National-Louis

University's McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership and the Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative at the University of Illinois. The research, funded by the McCormick Foundation, examines the progress made since the 2001 publication of the first *Who's Caring for the Kids?*

The research report combines statistical data from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), and several other state and national reports. In addition to these established data sources, three new statewide surveys were distributed in spring 2008 to gather current information regarding staffing, compensation, turnover, professional development opportunities, and the career aspirations of practitioners. The report also incorporates interview data from state and national leaders regarding key issues impacting the early childhood workforce, state and national trends in professional development, and emerging roles in the field.

Achievements Since 2001

The report highlights several statewide achievements. Since 2001, Illinois has established an Early Learning Council, implemented Preschool for All, and rolled out a quality rating system, Quality Counts-QRS. State policymakers have also addressed the professional needs of the early childhood workforce through creation of the Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC), establishment of Gateways to Opportunity, and a credentialing system for the early childhood workforce.

The latest report finds an emerging and integrated system with a coherent career framework for early childhood practitioners, a significant improvement since the 2001 report which found that Illinois lacked a coherent career development system. The 2008 update also tracks significant workforce changes in education levels, compensation, and turnover rates.

Key Findings

The key findings of the 2008 report include:

- **Education Matters.** The number of community-based lead teachers holding a bachelor's degree rose to 48% in 2008, up from 37% in 2001. In addition, almost 20% of these lead teachers hold early childhood certification, which qualifies them to teach 3- and 4-year old children in Illinois' Preschool for All programs.

More than 75% of lead teachers who do not currently have a Type 04 early childhood certification report they are interested in continuing their education to complete a bachelor's degree and/or attain early childhood certification.

- **Compensation Matters.** The wide variation in wages and benefits across sectors is drawing teachers away from community-based programs to public schools. Lead teachers with early childhood certification employed by community-based programs earn 44% less than comparably certified teachers in public school programs. Lead teachers with a bachelor's degree earn 20% more than those without the degree.

The turnover rate for teachers is closely associated with compensation levels. In licensed programs, the two-year turnover rate for teachers is 28% while the rate for the lower-paid assistant teachers is 41%.



Continued on page 2

• **Leadership Matters.** Director qualifications, including level of education, specialized management training, and experience, are directly related to program quality. Directors with higher levels of education were better able to support the professional development of their teachers and secure funding for Preschool for All. In fact, one-fourth of center directors receiving Preschool for All funds hold an Illinois Director Credential.

The study also found that the qualifications of directors appear to be declining, a finding consistent with the national trend. In 2001, 72% of full-time directors reported having a bachelor's degree or higher compared to only 66% in 2008.

• **Diversity Matters.** Early childhood teachers are not representative of or prepared to teach the changing population of children in Illinois. Most early childhood teachers speak only English, yet more than one-third of children in Illinois speak a home language other than English.

Gender diversity is also an issue; only 1% of lead teachers and center directors are male.

• **The Professional Development System Matters.** Illinois has an emerging and sophisticated system of professional development and a career lattice tied to credentials and college degrees. Practitioners seeking an ECE Credential, Infant Toddler Credential, Illinois Director Credential, or Type 04 early childhood certification are able to obtain scholarship assistance through the Gateways to Opportunity Scholarship Program. Currently, however, there is no connection between the credentials identified on the Gateways to Opportunity career lattice and the differing roles, job opportunities, and levels of compensation available to early childhood practitioners.

The study also found that despite the emergence of distance education and online learning, most early childhood education degree programs remain entrenched in traditional formats and daytime scheduling of classes.

A Call to Action

Illinois has emerged as a national leader in the design and implementation of its professional development system. It leads the nation in funding prekindergarten for

3-year olds and has invested substantially in expanding prekindergarten to serve more 4-year olds. In order to maintain the tremendous gains evidenced since 2001, it will require the continued engagement of multiple stakeholders.

Early childhood practitioners must be well-qualified and competent in their various roles. They must commit themselves to obtaining the professional credentials identified on the Gateways to Opportunity career lattice. They must commit to grow professionally through ongoing professional development and acquire the knowledge and skills to teach an increasingly diverse population of children. They must also acquire the skills to support the inclusion of children with developmental delays and meet the social and emotional needs of all children.

Teacher educators must develop more flexible programs to respond to the needs of early childhood practitioners working in all settings. They must design educational opportunities that are available at non-traditional times and places, can be delivered online or through cohort models, and that provide appropriate credit for experience.

All teacher preparation programs must have clear articulation between community colleges and four-year colleges to support the transfer of students. These programs must address the cultural and linguistic diversity in the state and prepare teachers to work with children who are English language learners.

Policymakers must embed the credentials identified on the career lattice in state rule making and link the credentials to enhanced compensation strategies so that practitioners who obtain credentials see real economic benefits for their efforts. Policymakers must make compensation—wages and benefits—equitable across sectors to assure comparable, high-quality early care and education for young children in all Preschool for All settings.

The findings and recommendations of *Who's Caring for the Kids?* provide a clear path to elevate the early childhood workforce and the developmental outcomes for Illinois' young children. A united effort by practitioners, teacher educators, and policymakers can make it happen.

Copies of the full report and executive summary are available (\$20, plus \$5 postage) by calling (800) 443-5522, ext. 5063. The report is also available on the Center's Web site (<http://cecl.nl.edu>).

The Director's Link is made possible by funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and the McCormick Foundation, and is distributed free of charge to early childhood directors in Illinois.

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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 and technical assistance, program evaluation, research, and public awareness.



The Director's Toolbox

Tips for More Effective Meetings

Meetings are the glue that holds organizations together. Early childhood organizations are no exception. At most child care centers, staff meetings are the primary vehicle for decision making and problem solving. Here is a two-minute evaluation that can be completed by staff at the end of each meeting to assess their perceptions of the meeting. The feedback generated will help you determine what changes need to be made in the structure and process of future meetings to make them more effective.

Agenda	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Poorly defined, not followed			Focused appropriately, followed		
Participation	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Dominated by a few			Balanced among many		
Listening	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Inattentive			Attentive		
Trust	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Distrustful			Supportive and encouraging		
Decisions	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Forced by a few			Supported by all		
Disagreement	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Divisive or conflict suppressed			Conflict resolved, negotiated		
Criticism	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Directed at individuals			Directed at processes or issues		
Candor	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Guarded or overly polite			Open and direct		
Use of Time	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor			Efficient		
Facilitation	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Improvement needed			Effective		
Creativity	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Status quo reinforced			New ideas explored		
Overall Meeting	0	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor			Excellent		

Comments:

Adapted from Children's Memorial Hospital, Chicago

Planning Ahead

Professional Development Opportunities

Packing Power into Presentations \$45

Friday, January 30, 2009 • College of Lake County, Illinois • Grayslake Campus

Take your presentations to the next level. Learn the potential of Microsoft® Office PowerPoint® 2007 for creating winning presentations and how to select a multimedia projector for your center. Become familiar with best practices for integrating technology into presentations. This workshop, funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Participants will receive a certificate of attendance documenting six hours of training toward renewal of the Illinois Director Credential (IDC).

Technology in Child Care Administration—Intermediate Level \$75

February 27, March 6, 13, 27 and April 3, 2009 • NLU's Chicago Campus

This course, funded by IDHS, provides intermediate instruction to computer technology as an administrative tool in the management of child care programs. Lab sessions will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Topics include: Creating electronic forms with Microsoft® Word 2007; constructing complex spreadsheets with Microsoft® Excel 2007; designing flyers and brochures with Microsoft® Publisher 2007; and building databases with Microsoft® Access 2007. Additional content and activities will be delivered online.

Participants successfully finishing the course will receive a certificate of completion documenting 30 hours of training for use towards the Illinois Director Credential (IDC). Individuals may also earn two semester hours of graduate credit from National-Louis University (ECE535, Technology in Child Care Administration II) by paying an additional fee.

Family Child Care Institute—Indoor and Outdoor Environments

February 28 and May 16, 2009

Meeting the needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children is one of the biggest challenges faced by family child care providers. In this institute participants will learn how the environment affects every facet of the program from morning arrival until evening departure. The essentials of design and space utilization, as well as health and safety considerations, will be covered. Featured presenters are Shirley Flath, Liliam Perez, and Migdalia Young.

Funded by IDHS, this institute will be conducted over two days. The first day will focus on indoor environments and will be held at the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership on National-Louis University's Wheeling, Illinois campus. This session will be presented in both English and Spanish. The second day will focus on outdoor environments and will be held in conjunction with the Center's Leadership Connections conference at the Westin Chicago North Shore in Wheeling.

The registration fee is \$75 for one day or \$120 for both days and is due by February 15, 2009. The fee includes texts, handouts, and meals (breakfast and lunch). Participants can also earn one semester hour of graduate credit (ECE544, Early Childhood Environments) by paying an additional fee, completing a project, and engaging in an online discussion.

Program Administration Scale—Assessor Reliability Training

March 2-5, 2009 or September 14-17, 2009

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. The training is held at the McCormick Tribune Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University, Wheeling Campus Annex. The registration fee of \$850, includes all texts, materials, and meals.

Hotel accommodations are available at the Candlewood Suites, adjacent to the Center. To make a reservation, call (847) 520-1684. Participants may receive two semester hours of graduate credit (ECE582C, Early Childhood Program Evaluation) by paying an additional fee.

Professional Development Opportunities

Taking Charge of Change

Summer Institute: August 3-8, 2009 • Follow-up Retreats: November 12-14, 2009 and May 12-15, 2010

Join the ranks of over 450 directors in Illinois who have taken part in this extraordinary professional development experience. *Taking Charge of Change* is guaranteed to transform how you think about your role as an early childhood leader. Topics focus on individual and organizational change and the director's role as change agent. Through interactive learning, group discussions, guided reflection, reading, and visits to exemplary programs, participants explore the components of quality programming and how to implement change to achieve program excellence.

The training begins with an intensive six-day residential summer institute. A follow-up retreat in the fall is held to report on progress in implementing a program improvement plan. The training culminates with attendance at the Center's national Leadership Connections conference. Mentors are available for consultation during the year to assist participants in implementing their program improvements.

Space is limited to 28 participants. Priority is given to directors whose programs serve IDHS-funded children. Application deadline is June 2, 2008. Participants' portion of the training cost is only \$425. This fee includes full participation in the summer institute and follow-up retreats, all text, lodging, food, and materials. For an additional fee, individuals may receive six semester hours of credit from National-Louis University (ECE525, Strategies for Supervision and Staff Development and EPS526, Group Dynamics and Leadership Applications).

For more information about these professional development opportunities, please contact Debra Trude-Suter at (800) 443-5522, ext. 5056 or debra.trudesuter@nl.edu. You can also visit us online at <http://cecl.nl.edu>.

"Opening Minds"

Join us at the Chicago Metro AEYC Conference

January 22-24, 2009

Hyatt Regency

McCormick Place

Please visit us at booth #712 in the exhibition hall



DON'T MISS THIS GREAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY!

Leadership Connections
Westin Chicago North Shore
May 14-16, 2009

Register online at <http://cecl.nl.edu>

Take Time Out to Join a Discussion Online

The Center annually hosts a series of online discussions moderated by nationally recognized early childhood experts. These online discussions are open to the public. Join the conversation 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 professionals.



Planning Indoor and Outdoor Environments for Family Child Care

Monday, March 2 – Saturday, March 7, 2009

Guest expert: Shirley Flath, consultant to child care programs throughout Illinois and Missouri

This discussion will cover the essentials of how to set up and maintain engaging indoor and outdoor learning environments for children in family child care settings.



Writing for Publication

Monday, March 30 – Saturday, April 4, 2009

Guest expert: Donna Rafanello, Assistant Professor, Long Beach City College and Associate Editor and for Exchange Press

The focus of the discussion will be identifying writing outlets, determining your area(s) of expertise, preparing your submission, responding to editorial suggestions, and rewrites.

Congratulations! To our *Who's Caring for the Kids?* survey raffle winners. Each lucky center won a \$50 Kaplan gift certificate to purchase professional resources.

Our sincere appreciation to all the directors who took time to complete the surveys for this research and to Kaplan Early Learning for their generous donation!

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Happy New Year from our family to yours

*The faculty and staff of the McCormick Tribune Center
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