



Inside Gateways Newsletter—Spring 2010

Greetings! Welcome to the spring edition of *Inside Gateways*, the Gateways to Opportunity quarterly e-newsletter. As we welcome the changes that warmer temperatures and sunshine bring to spring and early summer here in central Illinois, I can't help but compare how our professional landscape is also changing.

On January 21, 2010, Governor Quinn signed Gateways Credentials into law! The signing of House Bill 806 (**now Public Act 096-0864**) represents years of hard work by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Bureau of Child Care and Development, the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA), and the Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC), as well as advocacy organizations such as Illinois Action for Children. This act gives IDHS the authority to operate Gateways to Opportunity, a comprehensive professional development system that supports the workforce serving children and youth. As part of this comprehensive system, IDHS will award Gateways-to-Opportunity credentials to early care and education and school-age and youth development practitioners in Illinois. Gateways **Credentials** validate an individual's qualifications and are issued based upon professional achievements in the field, experience, knowledge and skills, educational attainment, and training accomplishments. The signing of the bill into law allows other state agencies to recognize and potentially embed Gateways Credentials within program requirements.

Changes are everywhere! Here are a few of the most significant:

- Thanks to Head Start funding, there is now a new "**Office of Early Childhood Development**" being established here in Illinois.
- The **Illinois Early Learning Council** is undergoing structural changes that include new areas of committee focus as well as staffing changes for the committees.
- A new **Principal Endorsement** will replace the former Type 75 Certification.
- The **Illinois Professional Teaching Standards** are being reviewed.
- The **Illinois State Board of Education** has new Bilingual/ESL Certification.

Last, but certainly not least in terms of potential impact, the Illinois legislature is working on the FY11 budget. The current budget shortfall in Illinois has significant implications for everyone: citizens and taxpayers, the workforce, children and families, school districts and early childhood programs, health and human services. Virtually every service or agency supported with any state dollars may undergo "change" as this budget is finalized.

The early childhood landscape here in Illinois is indeed rapidly changing. You owe it to yourself as well as the children and families you serve to keep apprised of these changes. Use the links on our **home page** to keep informed about critical state and federal policy and budget decisions that impact services for children, youth, and families. Monitor the landscape, be informed, and take time to celebrate change for the positive!

Thank you for all that you do for children and families, every day, in the midst of change.

Credential Corner

In this issue's Credential Corner, we highlight the **Infant Toddler Credential (ITC)**, which validates the knowledge, skills, and experience needed to work with infants and toddlers.

Marie Chandel Spurgeon



"Not only is [the Infant Toddler Credential] an asset to the agencies you work in, it will validate your own knowledge in the field. It also pushes you out of your comfort zone and may expose other talents."

Chandel is a teacher supervisor in the infant toddler room at **Christopher House**, a program serving low-income children and their families in Uptown Chicago. During her 13 years at Christopher House, Chandel's work responsibilities have increased as she moved from assistant teacher to lead teacher and, most recently, to the supervisor of the infant toddler room.

Many people encouraged Chandel to get the **Infant Toddler Credential (ITC)** through **Gateways to Opportunity**. "My employer encouraged me to get the ITC. I also have a professional mentor, Marsha Hawley, who helped me see the benefit of getting the ITC. Marsha saw my professional growth from assistant teacher to lead teacher to supervisor, and she felt this was a good next step for me to take."

Chandel was grateful for the encouragement. "The ITC validates what I do as an infant toddler teacher. To me, acquiring my ITC is comparable to the Type 04 certification that early childhood teachers get in Illinois. It allows me to attach a credential to what I consider my passion and to validate my work." Chandel believes that having a specialized credential to work with infants and toddlers is becoming an expectation. "The ITC is definitely a big 'buzz' within the infant toddler community. I can see a shift occurring as more recognize the unique needs of infants and toddlers."

Some of the requirements of the ITC came easily to Chandel. "I was asked to document what I was already doing in the classroom, to display and articulate my knowledge and skills with infants and toddlers."

Chandel found other aspects of the ITC process more challenging. "The professional contributions component of the ITC required that I do a training for other teachers, which pushed me out of my comfort zone because I had never presented to others before." Another new experience came with fulfilling the advocacy component of the ITC. "I did some work for the Week of the Young Child and learned how to explain the importance of paying attention to early care and education."

Since her first ITC experience as a trainer, Chandel has been invited to do other trainings in the area. "Before the ITC experience, I was mainly in the classroom and hadn't had the opportunity to explore other avenues such as training and advocacy, areas that I now recognize I can do and enjoy."

Chandel encourages others to earn their ITC. "If infant toddler care is something you care about, getting your ITC is beneficial to your own professional development. Not only is it an asset to the agencies you work in, it will validate your own knowledge in the field. It also pushes you out of your comfort zone and may expose other talents. It piqued my interest in training others—something I might never have discovered if it weren't an ITC requirement."

Neidra Travis



"The ITC experience gives you a better understanding of infants and toddlers and their families. I understand the ITC may become a requirement for more teachers of infants and toddlers in our state. Professionals with the ITC will eventually be in high demand."

Neidra Travis is a lead teacher at the **Ounce of Prevention Educare Center**, an early childhood program that serves 150 at-risk infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in Chicago. Neidra has been with Educare for four years and works with the older 2-year-old children and their families.

Neidra learned about the **Infant Toddler Credential (ITC)** offered through **Gateways to Opportunity** when it became a requirement for her position as a lead teacher with Educare. "Although my initial

motivation to get the ITC was to fulfill a work requirement, I soon learned that the ITC helped my self-awareness as a professional. By earning my ITC, I was learning about the actual work I was doing with children and their families.”

Like other Gateways credentials, the ITC requires a combination of education and training and work and practical experience. “The most challenging part of getting the ITC was finding college classes that specialize in infant and toddler care.” said Neidra. “I found the courses I needed at **Kendall College**, which had the added benefit of being offered online. I was able to fit the ITC courses around my work schedule.”

One of the components of the ITC is to apply knowledge in other professional settings. To meet this requirement, Neidra elected to consult with someone who had a family child care business. “I helped this provider think about how she could enhance her child care environment and her interactions with parents and with the young children in her program. Sharing my expertise in this way helped me better understand my own work with infants and toddlers.”

Some of the courses that Neidra completed for the ITC addressed cultural considerations in working with families and how to interact with families who have children with special needs. “The courses I completed on assessing children with special needs and helping parents go through the IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) and the IEP (Individualized Education Plan) processes were helpful when parents in my program struggled with their child’s diagnosis.”

“I had a parent who came into the classroom who was upset regularly, which often trickled down to the child. These courses helped me to reflect on my approach with parents so they can feel comfortable letting their guard down with me.”

Neidra encourages others who work with infants and toddlers to consider getting the ITC. “The ITC experience gives you a better understanding of infants and toddlers and their families. I understand the ITC may become a requirement for more teachers of infants and toddlers in our state. Professionals with the ITC will eventually be in high demand.”

Neidra completed her **ECE Credential 5** and ITC Level 2 in December 2009. She hopes to complete her ITC Level 5 Credential later this year.

Lilian Katz: Reflections

Distinctions between a Child’s Culture and a Child’s Heritage



Lilian Katz challenges us to think about the distinction between a child’s culture (the experiences a child is having right now) and a child’s heritage (the experiences, traditions, and customs characteristic of a child’s family—parents, grandparents, and early ancestors.). How can early childhood educators respect a child’s heritage and help children make sense of their culture—their current experiences and environment?

Over the course of many years of experience working with our colleagues around the world, I have always felt some satisfaction from knowing that the commitment to cultural and ethnic diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice, now so widely shared, began in our country nearly 50 years ago. But the implications of these basic values for curriculum and teaching in the preschool years are not simple.

As I work with teachers of young children all around our country, the commitment to social justice is often interpreted to mean that children will celebrate all the holidays and festivals represented among and around them and that they will also enjoy eating the wide varieties of foods that their teachers and parents of diverse backgrounds offer them.

These aspects of acknowledging and welcoming diverse cultures and languages are certainly important. Teachers can always welcome children’s contributions of information about their home cultures to their peers. In addition, teachers can encourage children to teach each other how to express in their own home languages various ideas and label elements of their common environment and experiences. However, many other complex issues should be considered with regard to valuing and respecting diverse cultures. It is also important to take into account our preschoolers’ readiness to grasp the significance of those issues.

When it comes to our youngest children, I find it useful to make a distinction between a child’s *culture* and a child’s *heritage*. A child’s culture consists of the experiences that he or she is actually having right now. A child’s heritage, on the other hand, can be thought of as the experiences, traditions, and customs characteristic of his or her parents, grandparents, and early ancestors.

To some extent, this distinction stems from the experience of my own children growing up in a country that was not the same as where I grew up (England) and where their father grew up (Russia and China). In addition, I am often reminded of my own experience of having grown up in a country that was foreign to my mother, who grew up in a country that was foreign to her parents. I particularly recall my own mother being critical of what was clearly “natural” to young English children and not to children in Paris, where she experienced her childhood. She also had a similar experience of growing up in a country to which her parents brought her from the Ukraine when she was 2 years old. She knew the local language very much better than her parents did, and they too struggled to grasp what seemed very “natural” to young French children compared to the behavior that was permissible in the communities from which they had come.

Our young children growing up in the United States today have video games and television shows and many other significant elements of the culture that they are immersed in—for better or worse! In other words, a child’s *culture* consists of the experiences that she or he is having on a day-to-day basis, which may be quite different from the childhoods and day-to-day experiences of their parents and grandparents.

On the other hand, their *heritage* is about the customs, beliefs, holidays, festivals, and other traditions and patterns of behavior of the child’s family and ancestors. These are worthy of understanding and may warrant appreciation and celebration. The issue I want to raise here concerns *when* it is most appropriate for educators to involve children in deepening their knowledge and understanding of their heritage. I suggest that the answer seems to be during the primary grades rather than during the preschool period. Yes, occasional celebrations are likely to be welcomed and enjoyed. But in so many programs, the curriculum seems to be dominated by one festival after another.

I suggest that a major goal of the curriculum during the preschool years is to help children make better, deeper, and fuller sense of their own experiences and environments, that is, their culture. As they grow older, one of the major goals of the curriculum is to help children to make better, deeper, and fuller sense of other people’s experiences—those far away in both time and place.

We have to bear in mind that cultures constantly change; they always have done and always will. Often the changes cause internal contradictions. Furthermore, it is a good idea to remember that culture is largely about things we are not aware of until somebody or something violates them.

Note also that the sages of the ages have always complained about the behavior of youth, especially about their disrespect for their elders, and have claimed that the young do with impunity what they themselves never did at that age! It may be true that for each generation, the range of permissible or tolerated behavior steadily widens—for better or worse!

Finally, we have to bear in mind also that just because people belong to the same culture or similar heritage does not mean that they all agree with each other about how best to raise or to teach children.

Elsewhere in this issue, Sonia Soltero talks about ways that teachers of very young children can help to value children’s native languages other than English. Although that important topic is related, it is separate from the distinction drawn here between culture and heritage.

Practices, Programs, and Publications

Baby TALK: Deb Widenhofer



Baby TALK (*Teaching Activities for Learning and Knowledge*) is a national model for supporting families of very young children. Baby TALK was started in Decatur, Illinois, in 1986 and currently offers services to families with children birth to 3 in more than 36 states. Baby TALK is also affiliated with the Harvard Medical School’s **Touchpoints** project developed by Dr. T. Berry Brazelton. You can read more about the **origins of Baby TALK** and its founder Claudia Quigg on the Baby Talk site.

In this feature, Deb Widenhofer, director of the Baby TALK Training Institute and a member of the **Professional Development Advisory Council** Steering Committee, talks about how Baby TALK’s strategies and services support the professional development of those who care for infants and toddlers in Illinois.

When Claudia Quigg founded Baby TALK 24 years ago, her goal was to establish model programs for parents and professionals who care for infants and toddlers, conduct research about best practice in the model programs, and develop training materials based on those best practices.

Baby TALK's earliest training materials—**Babies & Books: A Joyous Beginning** and **Read for Joy!**—supported Baby TALK's mission to “positively impact child development and nurture healthy parent child relationships during the critical early years.” Since the release of these two parent education resources in 1988 and 1992, respectively, Baby TALK has continued to expand their service delivery, their research on best practices, and their training development for those who work with infants and toddlers. In 2006, the State of Illinois designated Baby TALK as one of three models that **state-funded programs** could use with young children who are at risk for developmental challenges.

Baby TALK's Decatur program is a model site for the Illinois State Board of Education **Prevention Initiative** and provides the parent curriculum for the center-based programs that care for infants and toddlers within the **Chicago Public Schools**.

This year, Baby TALK was awarded one of two new Early Head Start grants in Illinois. Baby TALK is offering Early Head Start services through their Decatur site and will be adapting their professional development training for use in the Early Head Start home visiting and center-based program models.

Baby TALK will make these new trainings available through the Gateways to Opportunity **Registry**. Other Registry-approved trainings include “Baby TALK Professional Development: Trustworthy System of Support for Families, Professionals, and Communities” and “Baby TALK Early Childhood Professionals: A Trustworthy System of Support for Families and Professionals.” Additional Baby TALK trainings that will become available through the Registry include “Early Language and Literacy Development” and “Children with Special Needs.” The latter training is based on Baby TALK's experiences with its long-established inclusive **infant-toddler program** in Decatur, Illinois.

Beginning in 2004, Baby TALK collaborated with **Millikin University** in Decatur to offer a early childhood degree program leading to a Type 04 teaching certificate. Claudia Quigg and Deb Widenhofer co-teach several courses at Millikin University, which offers a day-time program for traditional college students and an accelerated evening program called **PACE** (Professional Adult Comprehensive Education) for adults with associate degrees and work experience who want to earn a bachelor's degree.

A central component in all of Baby TALK's training programs for parents and practitioners is guided, reflective practice, a critical concept Baby TALK calls “becoming ever better.” The phrase and concept of “becoming ever better” came from Baby TALK's work with Dr. Brazelton's **Touchpoints project**. The Touchpoints training includes observations of Dr. Brazelton's interactions with families as well as observations of interactions between parent and child. In reviewing video footage of his own interactions with families in his practice, Dr. Brazelton (who turns 92 years old this spring) often shares reflections on ways he could improve his own practice with families, explaining that he wants to “become ever better” the next time that he encounters the child and family. Baby TALK hopes to inculcate an attitude of “becoming ever better” in its professional development for those who care for infants and toddlers.

An Interview with Sonia Soltero



Inside Gateways (IG) staff talked to Sonia Soltero (SS) about her work on bilingualism in early childhood education. **Dr. Soltero** is an associate professor in the School of Education at DePaul University and the director of the **Bilingual-Bicultural Education Program**.

IG: Your academic research focuses on dual language learning in the early childhood years. Why is this an important topic?

SS: First, we should clarify the terminology. It is not dual language learning but rather bilingual education that we are talking about. Dual language learning is a broad term to define anyone who learns in two languages. It is an important distinction, and one that is frequently confused. The early care and education (ECE) field often uses the term “dual language learners” to mean what the rest of the world calls “English Language Learner” or “ELL.” Dual language is a model under the broad bilingual education umbrella that involves becoming bilingual and biliterate—being literate in two languages. Bilingual learners are technically those who already know or will develop two languages. To a large extent, the federal government refers to this population as “Limited English Proficient (LEP)”; however, in the education field, we often refer to this population as “English Language Learners (ELL).”

Back to your question about its importance in early childhood. Bilingualism is important on many levels. Research tells us that those who are balanced bilinguals (who know two languages well) have cognitive advantages because they have at their disposal two language systems. There are academic advantages when the native language is well developed (meaning the student can use both languages for conversation and for academics). When you learn to read and write in the language you know best, you are more likely to learn to read and write better and will be more successful at transferring those skills to a second language.

There are economic advantages to reading and writing in two languages as well. Many jobs require fluency and the ability to read and write in more than one language. Some larger metropolitan areas are paying their police officers to learn a second language so that they can serve their communities better. In many places, you earn a higher salary if you know more than one language.

There are also social and cultural advantages because you can communicate and function in two worlds—your native language and culture as well as the mainstream language and culture. The United State is looking for individuals who are biliterate for national security positions and to serve in policy and economic positions that will help to maintain our global competitiveness. There are multiple advantages to being bilingual and biliterate.

IG: What are some of the common misconceptions about bilingualism in young children?

SS: There are at least five common misconceptions:

1. Children will get confused if you allow them to speak their native language while helping them to learn English. Children learn more than one language in countries all over the world without difficulty. I think this particular misconception reflects a kind of narrow thinking.
2. Children won't learn English. The data show that by the second or third generation children no longer speak the language of their parents because the pull to learn English is so very strong.
3. You can drop children in an all-English-language environment and they will learn English because they are very young. This misconception is not supported by evidence. Infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children have not fully developed their native language. When we immerse them in English only, they typically pick up conversational English but not the sophisticated language required for academic learning.
4. Bilingual education costs more. Whether students are learning academics in English or in Spanish, they require qualified teachers and appropriate educational resources.
5. It is a crutch for children to allow them to continue speaking in their native language. Again, the evidence is not there. The motivation is very strong to learn English because much in the child's environment is in English and most of their friends speak English.

Linda Espinosa has a helpful publication on this topic titled **Challenging Common Myths about Young English Language Learners**, which I recommend to your readers.

IG: How can early childhood teachers, particularly those who work with infants and toddlers, support the continued development of native languages and cultures among those who are just starting to acquire the English language?

SS: To begin, it will be helpful if early childhood teachers can disavow the common misperceptions I just discussed. Another way that teachers of very young children can help is to value the child's native language and culture. Include classroom materials (e.g., books, songs, classroom displays) in the child's native language. Invite parents and other community members to the classroom to read to children in their native language. Encourage parents to speak their native language at home. I've heard some teachers encourage parents to only speak English at home with their children even if parents do not know English very well. This is not helpful for several reasons. It sends a message to the child and family that what they bring from their home, like their language and culture, isn't valued. If parents don't know English very well, they will not be good English language models for their young children. It is also very difficult for parents to maintain a close relationship with their children when they are trying to speak a language they are not fluent in. As a result, over time family ties begin to break down—the child loses respect for her parents and the parents lose their authority with their child. Early childhood teachers should encourage parents to speak, read, play music, and sing to their children in the language the parents know best.

IG: What are some of the professional development opportunities and challenges you see for those who teach and care for bilingual young children in Illinois?

SS: Information is getting out about the Illinois law related to ELL education, which took effect on January 1, 2009. The law includes preschool students in the definition of children with limited English-speaking ability who are eligible for services through the schools. Rule changes have been proposed by the Illinois State Board of Education to define how screening will be done and how language support services will be provided to eligible preschool children. The proposed changes, which are completing a public comment period, would require the following: (1) offering transitional bilingual instruction to preschoolers and (2) requiring Type 04 certified staff who teach in bilingual transitional education preschool classrooms with 20 students to hold a **bilingual/English as a Second Language Approval**. These are significant changes that will impact the kind of professional development we offer to those entering the early childhood teaching field.

In light of the new Transitional Bilingual Education state law as well as the proposed changes to the law, teachers of young children would be wise to seek out opportunities to receive their **English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement**. I know there are opportunities in the Chicago area to go back to school to get the ESL endorsement. DePaul University where I teach is the first to require that all undergraduate students seeking a Type 04 teacher certification to also get their ESL and/or bilingual endorsement. I know other higher education institutions are exploring new opportunities to prepare the early childhood workforce as well. The **Erikson Institute**, a graduate school in child development, offers a bilingual/ESL endorsement program for graduate students, for example. There are fewer opportunities in the rest of the state, even though we know that more and more English Language Learners are in communities throughout Illinois. Technology might help universities and other education centers reach our more remote areas of the state.

New Gateways Resources

The following resource links have been added to the Web site since the last issue of *Inside Gateways*.

Career Opportunities/Job Links

[Market Rate Survey of Licensed Child Care Programs in Illinois FY08](#)

Advocacy

[A Guide to Understanding State Child Care Subsidy Programs through Analysis of Public and Non-Public Use Datasets: August 2009](#)

[How Policymakers Should Deal with the Delayed Benefits of Early Childhood Programs](#)

[The Next Step in Systems-Building: Early Childhood Advisory Councils and Federal Efforts to Promote Policy Alignment in Early Childhood](#)

Research Reports

[A Matter of Degrees: Preparing Teachers for the Pre-K Classroom](#)

[The Costs of Disinvestment: Why States Can't Afford to Cut Smart Early Childhood Programs](#)

[Differences in Child Care Quality for Children with and without Disabilities](#)

[Dual Language Learning: What Does It Take?](#)

[Extending Home Visiting to Kinship Caregivers and Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers](#)

[Head Start Impact Study: January 2010](#)

[Illinois After-School Partnership Out-of-School-Time Workforce Survey](#)

[Impact: Feature Issue on Early Childhood Education and Children with Disabilities](#)

[Infants and Toddlers in CCDBG: 2008 Update](#)

[Leaving Children to Chance: NACCRRA's Ranking of State Standards and Oversight of Small Family Child Care Homes: 2010 Update](#)

[Making the Case: A 2009 Fact Sheet on Children and Youth in Out-of-School Time](#)

[National Infant and Toddler Child Care Initiative: Keys to High-Quality Child Care for Infants and Toddlers](#)

[Partnerships for Learning: Promising Practices in Integrating School and Out-of-School Time Program Supports](#)

[A Race Against the Clock: The Value of Expanded Learning Time for English Language Learners](#)

[Recognition & Response: Findings from the First Implementation Study](#)

Recommended Transition Practices for Young Children and Families

Responding to the Needs of Young Latino Children: State Efforts to Build Comprehensive Early Learning Systems

School-Age Children in CCDBG: 2008

State CCDBG Plans to Promote Opportunities for Babies & Toddlers in Child Care

The Illinois After-school Initiative 2002 Task Force Report

Transition Issues and Barriers for Children with Significant Disabilities and from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

Young Dual Language Learners: A Key Topic Resource List



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