

**The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development and the Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies** are pleased to announce the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity® ECE Credential Competency Project grant recipients:

- Heartland Community College, Normal IL
- Illinois State University, Normal, IL
- Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, IL
- National Louis University, Chicago, IL
- Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL

These Illinois higher education institutions will work collaboratively to create innovative early childhood teacher preparation pathways using the Gateways to Opportunity® ECE Credential competencies as the foundation for this ground-breaking work. Competency-based education offers multiple entry and exit points for educators at different stages of learning, creating increased accessibility for the early childhood workforce (which is more culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse than the broader teaching population). Well-designed online early childhood coursework, including avenues for assessment of prior learning and articulation of course credit aligned to credentials and degrees that includes a progression building from lower- to higher-level competencies, is a critical need in Illinois to help mitigate the teacher shortage.

This grant opportunity is funded through the Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five grant which allows Illinois to develop an overarching statewide strategic plan, informed by a needs assessment, which will guide systemic efforts to coordinate Illinois' mixed delivery system so that all children and families have access to the services they need to thrive.

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