



**Spring 2008**

Welcome to the Spring edition of Gateways to Opportunity quarterly e-newsletter!

As you read this issue, I would encourage you to think about the broad definition - and importance - of advocacy.

I challenge you to think of all the ways in which you have been an advocate for children and families. You may have made special efforts on behalf of a young child or family, expanded program parameters to be more inclusive at your place of work, or shared your views of public policy or legislation with those outside the field to help increase knowledge and understanding of the importance of the work that we do. All of these roles incorporate education and information sharing—other words for advocacy. In this newsletter, Joyce Weiner and Renee Deberry are profiled as two outstanding examples of individuals who have a direct role in advocacy through their work for public policy organizations. I encourage you to reflect on your experiences: How have you been an advocate? And can you expand your advocacy role, directly or indirectly, on behalf of children and families?

We benefit from advocacy efforts of both groups and individuals in so many ways. For example, thanks to the work of advocates on behalf of school-age children and youth, credentials for professionals who work in this arena are now in development. Gateways to Opportunity is currently expanding from an early care and education professional development system to include school-age children as well as youth. And advocates for the prevention of child abuse and neglect were a catalyst in the selection of Illinois for participation in a 2005 pilot program: Strengthening Families (SF). This program has moved from a pilot project to statewide implementation under the guidance of the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services. As you read more about both of these initiatives in this newsletter, remember that many wonderful opportunities to educate and inform others present themselves every day. It only takes one individual willing to speak out on behalf of a new idea or program to increase the probability of change.

If “advocacy” is not in your job title—or part of the organization you work for—you may not feel that you are an advocate for children and families. Challenge yourself to think about advocacy in broader terms: There are opportunities to advocate at both a personal and professional level. And **all** of us work directly and indirectly as advocates for what we believe in—children and families.

Thank you for your advocacy efforts on behalf of all children and families!



**Joni Scritchlow** and  
Gateways to Opportunity Professional Development Team

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## Profiles in Leadership

*Periodically in this e-newsletter, we profile Gateways' leaders to acquaint you with their work and to illustrate through their experiences the range of career options and paths available in early care and education.*

This issue of Inside Gateways profiles two individuals who work for advocacy and public policy organizations in Illinois.

### Joyce Weiner



Joyce Weiner is a Policy Associate for the [Ounce of Prevention Fund](#) in Chicago. Her formal education prepared her for a career in public policy. Joyce's undergraduate degree from the University of Kansas was in social work with a focus on child welfare issues, and her graduate degree from the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration emphasized public policy. But Joyce's interest in child and family policy systems can also be traced to an elementary school experience.

On a school field trip to a historical fort in her home state of Minnesota, Joyce "buddied-up" with a friend who was an Ojibwa Native American. The docent who guided the class praised a renowned general who had fought against the native people as the land was being settled by Europeans and who had also served as an early leader and politician in Minnesota.

Following the docent's remarks about the general, Joyce's friend said that her family told very different stories about the general based on atrocities committed against the Native Americans in the state. This experience helped Joyce recognize that there are varied perspectives and multiple truths in our society and history. That realization piqued her interest in hearing people's stories and set Joyce on her current path of wanting to create public systems that can meet the needs of children and families.

Years later, while working for the Evanston 4-Cs (Community Coordinated Child Care)—known today as the Evanston Child Care Network—Joyce developed a deeply rooted appreciation for the impact of the early years on children's future social-emotional and cognitive success. It was there that she first had the opportunity to observe high-quality birth-to-3 and preschool programs and become aware of the value of supporting nurturing parent-child interactions, professional development, and staff mentoring. Joyce's experiences at the Evanston 4-Cs influenced the rest of her career path and eventually led her back to early education and systems-building work with the Ounce of Prevention after many years in child abuse prevention.

After her children were born, Joyce spent much of her career in the field of child abuse prevention. She worked as a trainer for Parental Stress Services with area schools, community-based and governmental organizations, hospitals, and the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. She also investigated DCFS child abuse hotline calls for Catholic Charities and served as an evening and weekend social worker in the Children's Memorial Hospital emergency room. Joyce's experience in child abuse prevention provided a good overview of how various organizational systems and policies affect children and their families. However, she recognized that very often even productive interventions provide only temporary solutions to real crises in children's and families' lives. After nearly 20 years in child abuse prevention, Joyce became interested in refocusing on the early childhood years and in helping to build systems that could enhance those critical years.

In the summer of 2005, Joyce joined the public policy and advocacy division of the Ounce of Prevention's Kids PEPP (Public Education and Policy Project). In this position, she works with others on developing policies and programs that can give children in Illinois access to high-quality early care and learning opportunities. Joyce works on a variety of projects. She staffs the Workforce Development Committee of the [Early Learning Council](#) (ELC) as well as two related joint work groups: Cultural and Linguistic Diversity/Workforce Development and Infant & Toddler/Workforce Development. Joyce supervises the Kids PEPP student intern program, through which she is able to influence the professional direction of others who share her commitment to improving the lives of families in Illinois through public policy grounded in what is best for children. She also sits on the [Professional Development Advisory Council](#) (PDAC) Steering Committee and serves with Peggy Patten as co-chair of the PDAC Access & Outreach Committee.

## Renee Deberry



Renee Deberry is the Director of Provider Resources at [Illinois Action for Children](#) in Chicago. Renee works with a staff of 16 to administer services that fall within the core programming for the Cook County Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, which is part of Illinois Action for Children.

Renee's interest in the field of early care and education can be traced to her college years, when she wanted to be a preschool teacher. Renee decided to study child development at Malcolm X College in Chicago because they had a child care program through which students could get practical experience working with children. However, during her college years, Renee developed other interests and graduated with a BA degree in marketing communications. Upon graduation, Renee worked on public relations, marketing, and fundraising for Junior Achievement, a nonprofit organization that helps to prepare young people to succeed in a global economy. That position reawakened Renee's interest in working more directly with children and youth. She went back to school and received a master's degree in elementary education with teaching certification from Loyola University Chicago. While completing her graduate study, Renee worked part time at the Boys and Girls Club, an after-school program in Chicago. When she completed her graduate program, Renee became the director of an after-school faith-based program located at the Ebenezer Lutheran Church called After Three Connections. That position put Renee in touch with the [MOST](#) (Making the Most of Out of School Time) initiative at Illinois Action for Children.

In the 11 years since she has been at Illinois Action for Children, Renee has held a number of positions and worked on various initiatives. "I work on the program side, aligning our work with public policy," says Renee. "I see myself as an advocate, but not promoting a particular legislative agenda. I try to instill in my staff the public policy agenda related to our work, because it affects our ability to provide more enhanced services to the providers, youth, and families we serve."

Renee acknowledges the value in educating providers about the policy issues that affect their work and lives. "We make sure we are abreast of what is happening on the policy side so we can give providers current information, the language to use, and a comprehensive vision of what quality means so they can become effective advocates."

Keeping track of the "big picture" in early care and education in Illinois is part of Renee's day-to-day work. Occasionally she travels to national conferences to learn more about national issues affecting early care and education and to share Illinois experiences. Renee had an opportunity to do just that when she held a workshop on the state's new [Quality Rating System](#) (QRS) at the recent NACCRRRA (National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies) Conference in Washington, DC. "My workshop was packed with participants even though there had been other sessions on QRS and despite the lateness of the hour—we were the last session on a Friday. Everyone wanted to know what Illinois was doing in this area. There was an amazing energy level."

Renee finds that meeting with others around the country helps to put our work in Illinois in a new light. "I'm very positive about our work in school-age and youth programming, the development of the [Illinois School-Age Youth Credential](#) (I-SAY), and the related work around professional development for staff who work with youth. Services transitioning youth from school-age to youth programs have traditionally been lacking for youth 12, 13, or 14 years of age, a critical time for youth development," says Renee. "We are fortunate in Illinois to have the Gateways system around which to build school-age and youth professional development work. That is not the case elsewhere."

Renee also sits on the [Professional Development Advisory Council](#) (PDAC) and serves with Kathy Kloppenburg as co-chair of the I-SAY Qualifications & Credentials Committee.

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## Lilian Katz: Reflections

### Reflection Points for Early Childhood Professionals

The two leaders profiled in this issue of *Inside Gateways*, Joyce Weiner and Renee Deberry, are advocates for children and families in Illinois. Many of you likely wear an advocacy hat in your work as well. As you move through your various professional roles as director, teacher, family child care provider, home visitor, school-age care provider, parent educator, or advocate for children and families, you might want to consider the following “Reflection Points.” Lilian Katz has shared these thoughts with her students over the years with the hope that they apply these principles to their work.

- Remember that learning and development take time—change may not! We can change behavior quickly by using threats and punishments; but when these are removed, there is no real development. And remember that it is very hard to grow around impatient people!
- Respect your adversaries and resist the temptation to be defensive. Remember, whenever you respond defensively, it is partly because you believe the attack, or believe part of the attack; and when you are defensive, you are playing by the attacker's rules! Sometimes the attacker is right. But it seems best to respond professionally rather than personally. Furthermore, it seems to me that adversaries and enemies tend to become alike!
- Teaching involves many conflicting pressures and situations. We cannot respond fully or equally to all of them. We have to decide what is worth making an issue over. Don't make an issue over everything. Select those issues that really matter to you. But don't have too many: a half dozen issues will do! Then take your stand on them with clarity, confidence, and with courage—for the sake of the children.
- Take others' views seriously—there may be much to learn from them—but not more seriously than you take your own; for that is the essence of self-respect, and I believe that children benefit from being around self-respecting adults.
- Always assume that the people you work with have the capacities for greatness, creativity, courage, and insight. Occasionally this assumption will be wrong, perhaps. But if you always make it, you will be much more likely to uncover, encourage, strengthen, and support these qualities in them.
- Never underestimate the power of ideas! Bad ones as well as good ones! Ideas are distinctly human creations, and if they were not powerful, many people would not have been imprisoned, exiled, assassinated, sent to Siberia, burned at the stake, or crucified—because of their ideas.
- I think the great struggle of our time—and no doubt for generations to come—is the struggle for equality. But we might ask: equality of what? People are not equally tall or musical or mathematical or athletic or beautiful; but they are equally human! They are equally human in the sense that they all have hopes and dreams and wishes and fantasies and aspirations and fears and doubts. They all want to be treated with respect and dignity and want to feel loved by someone. In these ways, it seems to me, all of the world's people are more alike than they are different!
- I believe that we cannot have optimal environments for children in preschools, child care centers, and schools unless the environments are also optimal for the adults who work in them. Certainly on some days what is optimal for the children will be obtained at the expense of the adults (like Halloween parties), and on other days, vice versa. But on the average, on a day-to-day basis, both the children and the adults must find their lives together satisfying, interesting, and worth living.
- Each of us must come to care about everyone else's children. We must come to see that the well-being of our own individual children is intimately linked to the well-being of all other people's children. After all, when one of our own children needs life-saving surgery, someone else's child will perform it; when one of our own children is threatened or harmed by violence on the streets, someone else's child will commit it. The good life for our own children can be secured only if it is also secured for all other people's children. To worry about all other people's children is not just a practical or strategic matter—it is a moral and ethical one: to strive for the well-being of all other people's children is also right.

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## Current Early Care and Education Initiatives

Periodically in this e-newsletter, we provide updates on key professional development initiatives taking place in Illinois. Additional information and updates about each initiative are made available on the Gateways Web site.

- Strengthening Families Illinois
- Illinois School-Age and Youth (I-SAY) Credential

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### Strengthening Families Illinois

[Strengthening Families Illinois](#) (SFI) began in 2005 as a strategy to prevent child abuse and neglect by strengthening families. Illinois was one of seven states selected to pilot [Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education](#), an initiative that is being implemented nationwide by the [Center for the Study of Social Policy](#) with funding from the [Doris Duke Charitable Foundation](#). SFI works with child care centers and child welfare agency staff to incorporate evidence-based [protective factors](#) that help support children and families.

At the start of the SFI pilot, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) convened a meeting of parents, community leaders, and representatives of 20 collaborative partner organizations and state agencies from child welfare, child abuse prevention, family support, and early childhood. The partners created a SFI [strategic plan](#) to promote the protective factors across systems and settings. The initiative now has over 40 partner organizations, who are working on a new strategic plan for the next 3 to 5 years.

The SF approach in Illinois works through learning networks set up in each of the six DCFS regions of the state. A hub site in each region recruited local child care programs in the area to be part of the network. Each program receives training, technical assistance, resources, and peer-to-peer assistance supporting their implementation of the SF approach. In addition to curricula developed by the Midwest Learning Center for Family Support, other curricula developed by the Parent Services Project and the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) have been used. The [training](#) focuses on critical topics identified by SFI's partner organizations. These topics include how to build strong relationships with families, develop family-focused early care and education programs, and recognize and respond to signs of family stress. Other topics include how the protective factors contribute to child abuse prevention, how to talk to families about sensitive topics, and how to develop collaborative relationships between child welfare agencies and early care and education programs so they work in tandem to strengthen families.

Many centers had effective program strategies in place that built protective factors before participating in the SFI initiative, but the SFI resources, monthly meetings, and training provide a framework that has helped them to articulate their practices and deepen some of their existing efforts to support families. The following examples from the Cook County and the Southern Illinois Networks illustrate the various family support strategies and services that occur in programs around the state as a result of the Strengthening Families Initiative.

#### ***Carole Robertson Center for Learning***

It was a natural fit for the [Carole Robertson Center for Learning](#) (CRCL) to be the SFI learning network hub for the Chicago/Cook County area. CRCL is recognized nationally as an [exemplary program](#) supporting children and families. The CRCL network includes a range of programs serving young children and others in the Chicago area, including public and private schools, nonprofit agencies, and the All Our Kids network. The CRCL learning network meets monthly to share and discuss ideas and issues that pertain to Chicago families. Once each year, CRCL offers [training](#) in "Stronger Together," one of the curricula available through SFI for new members to the network.

Many centers in Cook County had family support programs in place before participating in the SFI initiative. The SFI resources provide a framework that helps centers to articulate and strengthen their practices and deepen some of their existing efforts to support families in ways that are more meaningful for the entire family. "The value of the monthly meetings and 'Stronger Together' curricula is that they help staff reflect on what they may already know about family support," says [Leslie Janes](#), Director of Quality Assurance and Program Development at CRCL. "The

monthly meetings help network members think outside the box and get ideas from one another on ways to create true family-friendly environments within their own programs.”

### ***Malone’s Early Learning Center***

[Malone’s Early Learning Center](#) (MELC) in Carterville is part of the Southern Illinois SFI [learning network](#). MELC is a large, multiservice program serving over 200 children with child care, PreK, and Head Start services. MELC is one of the largest DCFS program providers in the lower two-thirds of the state, serving many children in foster care or protective custody and many parents enrolled in Parents Too Soon or working on their GED.

Despite MELC’s long history of serving children and families (the program began in 1969), Executive Director [Lois Malone](#) said that SFI helped them consider the parents’ perspectives in new ways. “We have become more empathetic and supportive—and less judgmental—of parents as a result of our involvement with SFI,” says Lois. MELC has added more services on site to help families: dental, vision, and developmental screenings for children, and workshops and a resource room for parents. MELC is beginning a new program this spring to help families by providing backpacks with food for children so families can have nutritious meals over the weekends.

Members of the Southern Illinois learning network participate in the “Stronger Together” training events offered by SFI. They meet monthly in smaller regions and quarterly altogether in the larger 11-county Southern Illinois region. “The SFI meetings have strengthened our connections to one another,” says Lois. “This support system helps us provide better support to the families in each of our programs.”

“We’ve moved away from the previously held notion that parents can just drop their child off for child care in the morning and come back at night without needing to develop any real bond between staff and families. We know that bond is critical and helps parents do a better job with their children,” says Lois. One recent example of this attitude change occurred when a parent of a child at MELC lost her own father unexpectedly. To get support for her grief, the parent left work to come to Malone’s Early Learning Center because she felt she had nowhere else to go. Building social connections and providing support in times of need are among the protective factors that strengthen families and help to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Among the new ideas that the Southern Illinois network members have implemented are services and events such as a parent breakfast, a pizza night for families, parenting classes, and parent counseling services. Some network members have altered the space in their program to be more welcoming to families by setting up a parent-child reading corner or a resource lending library. In all cases, the SFI network members have become more attuned to practices that help families feel more welcome and less threatened. Simple practices such as greeting parents by their names and asking about their day go a long way toward making families feel more cared about, which in turn helps them develop healthy parent-child relationships, one of the SFI protective factors.

The Strengthening Families resources in Illinois extend beyond the programs that are directly part of the SFI Learning Networks. SFI training on the protective factors is available statewide through the [Child Care Resource and Referral agencies](#) and [Caregiver Connections Mental Health Consultants](#). SFI has recently expanded training on additional topics, such as “Recognizing and Responding to Signs of Family Stress.”

SFI, a year-to-year initiative, has plans to continue next year with a focus on deepening family-sensitive practices in child care programs and collaborating with child welfare workers. SFI will also provide information on the initiative and protective factors directly to parents through their [Love Is Not Enough to Keep Your Family Strong](#) (LINE) public awareness campaign. LINE includes [LINE Parent Cafes](#), informal, face-to-face meetings where parents talk to each other about how they keep their own families strong.

For more information, contact

Strengthening Families Illinois  
[info@strengtheningfamilies.org](mailto:info@strengtheningfamilies.org)  
312-421-5200, x125 (SFI Office)  
847-556-0219 (Fax)  
[www.strengtheningfamiliesillinois.org](http://www.strengtheningfamiliesillinois.org)

## **Illinois School-Age and Youth (I-SAY) Credential**

Since 2006, the Illinois School-Age and Youth (I-SAY) Committee, operating within the [Professional Development Advisory Council](#) (PDAC), has been working to develop a statewide credential that fits into the Gateways to

Opportunity professional development framework. When completed, the I-SAY Credential will help promote high-quality services to children and families by preparing and supporting qualified, well-trained school-age and youth development practitioners, standardizing personnel requirements within the field, and helping define an educational pathway for current school-age and youth professionals.

To better understand the professional development needs and interests of the school-age and youth development practitioners in Illinois—specifically their interest in obtaining a credential for the field—the I-SAY Committee conducted a [survey](#) of 357 workers in the spring of 2007. The results of that survey shape I-SAY's efforts in developing training opportunities, career pathways and recognition, and financial resources and incentives for school-age and youth development practitioners in Illinois. For up-to-date developments on the I-SAY Credential, visit [Gateways to Opportunity](#) and the [Illinois After School Network](#).

Gateways' comprehensive professional development system considers the specialized knowledge required to work and care for children and youth at various ages. Those who work with school-age youth (typically 5-14 years of age) and those who work with older youth (typically 10-21 years of age) require similar skills and knowledge. Although programs vary by setting, funding, and specific programming activities, a common thread in the work that school-age and youth development practitioners perform is helping children and young people learn about themselves, others, and society. Informal and structured educational activities combine enjoyment, challenge, learning, and achievement. Youth and school-age programs provide opportunities for children and young people to build positive relationships with peers and with practitioners who can support and encourage their well-being and positive development. The I-SAY Committee anticipates the need for two overlapping credentials to address the specialized knowledge required for school-age and youth development practitioners.

Like the specialized credentials being developed for those working with infants and toddlers and their families ([Infant Toddler Credential](#)), which build on a [core content of knowledge](#), the I-SAY Credential will build upon identified knowledge and competencies critical to those who work with school-age children and youth.

When completed, the I-SAY Credential will be included in Gateways' [career lattice](#) and become one more [credentialing opportunity](#) within Gateways to help to create a comprehensive workforce development system for those who work with young children and youth in Illinois.

The I-SAY Leadership Team has developed a timeline for completing the core content and relevant coursework required to earn school-age and youth credential(s). If you know of a higher education institution offering coursework that might support the I-SAY credential (course content that includes child and youth development, leisure and recreation, etc.) please contact Marian Caselton at INCCRRA: [mcaselton@inccrra.org](mailto:mcaselton@inccrra.org).

## New Gateways Resources

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

### Research Reports

Assessing Initiatives for Family, Friend, and Neighbor Child Care: An Overview of Models and Evaluations  
<http://www.childcareresearch.org/SendPdf?resourceId=11787>

Challenging Behaviors and the Role of Preschool Education (1.76 MB)  
<http://nieer.org/resources/policybriefs/16.pdf>

Challenging Common Myths about Young English Language Learners (2.37 MB)  
[http://www.fcd-us.org/usr\\_doc/MythsOfTeachingELLsEspinosa.pdf](http://www.fcd-us.org/usr_doc/MythsOfTeachingELLsEspinosa.pdf)

The Dynamic Relationship between Child Care Work Environments and Learning Environments  
<http://cecl.nl.edu/research/issues/rnw08.pdf>

The Early Care and Education Teaching Workforce: At the Fulcrum  
[http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/teachers\\_report\\_0107.pdf](http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/teachers_report_0107.pdf)

Early Childhood Professional Development Systems Toolkit  
<http://nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/index.html>

ECE-Learning: A National Review of Early Childhood Education Distance Learning Program  
[http://www.ccw.org/pubs/ELearning\\_Web.pdf](http://www.ccw.org/pubs/ELearning_Web.pdf)

Funding the Future: States' Approaches to Pre-K Finance  
[http://www.preknow.org/documents/FundingtheFuture\\_Feb2006.pdf](http://www.preknow.org/documents/FundingtheFuture_Feb2006.pdf)

The Impact of After-School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills (2.34 MB)  
<http://www.casel.org/downloads/ASP-Full.pdf>

Preschool Experience in 10 Countries: Cognitive and Language Performance at Age 7  
[http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/international/IEA\\_Age\\_7\\_ecrq\\_art.pdf](http://www.highscope.org/file/Research/international/IEA_Age_7_ecrq_art.pdf)

Professional Development: How Is It Defined? How Is It Measured?  
<http://cecl.nl.edu/research/issues/rnsp05.pdf>

Selected State and Local Policies to Support Immigrant and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Early Care and Education Providers  
[http://www.clasp.org/publications/policies\\_support\\_lep\\_providers07.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/publications/policies_support_lep_providers07.pdf)

The State of Preschool 2007  
<http://nieer.org/yearbook/pdf/yearbook.pdf#page=9>

Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Spring 2005  
<http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/childcare.html>

### **Research Centers**

National Center for Research on Early Childhood Education  
<http://www.ncrece.org/>

### **Advocacy**

Illinois General Assembly  
<http://www.ilga.gov/>

### **Early Childhood Initiatives**

Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE)  
<http://www.ilgateways.com/newsletter/archives/resources022008.aspx>

Bilingual Early Childhood Certification Assistance Program (BECCA)  
<http://transitiontoteaching.com/becca/index.html>

Quality Rating System  
[http://www.inccrra.org/overview.aspx?id=3801&ekmense=c57dfa7b\\_23\\_0\\_3801\\_6](http://www.inccrra.org/overview.aspx?id=3801&ekmense=c57dfa7b_23_0_3801_6)