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WELCOME TO THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE GATEWAYS INSIDER!

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to welcome you to the premier issue of Gateways Insider, Gateways to Opportunity's e-newsletter. Gateways was launched in March, 2005 as Illinois' first comprehensive network that addresses one of the most critical aspects of the early care and education field—the professional competence of those who provide the care and education to our youngest children in Illinois.

Gateways to Opportunity was created as a statewide support network that provides early care and education professionals, access to up-to-date career, education and training information. Now, we are bringing our resources right to you.

Each free issue will bring you articles from top early care and education professionals, like Dr. Lilian Katz, an international leader in early childhood education. Plus you'll discover upcoming events and ways to connect with your fellow early care and education professionals. Help us spread the word about Gateways by sending a message about this premiere issue to a friend today. And don't forget to sign up for the Gateways Insider!

Enjoy!



Karen Bruning
Professional Development Director
Gateways to Opportunity

First Group Earns Level 1 Credential

This past spring, 24 individuals from around the state completed Level 1 Credential training—the first group of early care and education professionals to do so in Illinois. Earning the Level 1 Credential requires completing 15 three-hour modules. The modules provide an introduction to the seven early childhood core knowledge areas—areas that form the basis for what every early care and education professional should know and be able to do at various levels of training, education, and role responsibilities. The seven core knowledge areas are (1) Child Growth and Development; (2) Child Observation and Assessment; (3) Curriculum and Instructional Methods; (4) Family and Community Relationships; (5) Health, Safety, and Nutrition; (6) Teaching/Learning Interactions and Environments; and (7) Personal and Professional Development.

The Level 1 Credential modules were developed by the Academic Development Institute, Inc., and Parents as Teachers National Center in Lincoln, Illinois, for individuals who want to learn more about early care and education and are not interested in college coursework. This credential is part of the Illinois Early Care and Education Career Lattice, a framework that provides multiple pathways for individuals to increase their education and training and career options in the field.

Shermell, a teacher in a child care center in Peoria with six years of experience, was among the first group of Level 1 Credential recipients. Shermell was motivated to complete the Level 1 Credential after reading about it in information she received from her local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, Child Care Connections. Although she already has six years of experience teaching and caring for young children, Shermell wanted to learn more. "The Credential helped to refresh my memory about different approaches to take with young children. It opened my eyes. I realize that there are always new things to learn."

The Level 1 Credential was valuable to another pair of recipients, Claudia and Lowana, a mother-daughter team setting up a family child care business in Evanston, Illinois. Claudia appreciated the opportunity to complete the Level 1 Credential, which

she learned about through the Carole Robertson Center in Chicago. “The modules covered all the aspects of a family child care business we needed to know about: what books to read to the children, what activities to provide, how to communicate effectively with children and with their parents. Some classes I’ve taken in the past provided too much information. The information in the Level 1 modules was just right. It definitely helped prepare my mother and me for our new family child care business.”

All Level 1 Credential recipients were awarded a certificate of completion to display in their child care program, an official Level 1 credential issued by Gateways to Opportunity and the Illinois Department of Human Services for their professional development files, a ribbon to wear to workshops and conferences to be recognized by their peers, a press release for them to use to publicize their Level 1 Credential through their local media, and individual recognition in an event held by their local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency.

Others interested in completing the Level 1 Credential will have an opportunity to do so in 2006 when the training becomes available statewide. To find out how to participate, contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency.

A complete list of all Level 1 Credential recipients and more reactions to the Level 1 training can be found on the Gateways to Opportunity Web site.

Lilian Katz: Reflections

Developmental Stages of Teachers

When we start a brand new job—whether as a secretary, a senator, or a surgeon—we can’t begin as a veteran. Learning all the elements of a job comes with experience, and experience takes time.

Learning to work with young children in groups can be thought to have developmental stages [<http://ilgateways.com/newsletter/lkatz/developmentalstages.aspx>]. We can call the first one the “the survival stage,” when the main goal is likely to be to get through the day with all children in the group in good spirits as well as in good health. Certainly some groups of children are easier to get used to than others. But most of us get through the survival stage reasonably well—sometimes in weeks, but sometimes longer—before we can begin to focus on individual children whose needs and behaviors require close observation and new strategies.

Most of us who work with the very young in early care and education settings begin to look for new ideas and activities after a year or two, and the field has many great resources for them.

It’s a good idea to take a developmental view of oneself as a caregiver, teacher, and professional in the field of early education. Then we can accept that our competence grows with experience and the right kind of support, and that it can continue to grow throughout our working lives.

The Illinois Gateways to Opportunity Project is designed to be responsive to the different developmental needs of all who work with young children in the State of Illinois. Here are some sources of information that can support your efforts to develop your knowledge and skills as an early childhood professional:

- A defined body of core knowledge [<http://www.ilgateways.com/coreknowledge/contentareas.aspx>] and competencies that serves as a foundation for all early care and education professionals.
- Listings of professional development opportunities [<http://www.ilgateways.com/calendar.aspx>] for all early care and education professionals, regardless of their stage of development.
- Information on careers [<http://www.ilgateways.com/careers/careersavailable.aspx>] and career pathways [<http://www.ilgateways.com/careers/careerlattice.aspx#lattice>] to consider in the early care and education field.
- Professional development advisors [<http://www.ilgateways.com/profdevel/profdevadvisors.aspx>] who provide assistance tailored to particular needs.

The next issue of the Gateways Newsletter will focus on Gateways Professional Development Advisors and how they can help you with your continued professional development.

Learn more about Dr. Lilian Katz. [<http://ilgateways.com/newsletter/lkatz/lkatzbio.aspx>]