



Winter 2008

Happy Birthday Gateways to Opportunity!

There is much to celebrate in 2008, including the fact that Gateways to Opportunity launched a new name and website three years ago in March 2005. As the first comprehensive professional development system in Illinois, Gateways to Opportunity addresses professional competence in the field of early care and education. In the three years since Gateways was launched, there have been significant changes and growth in many areas. This issue of Inside Gateways focuses on two: teacher training and education, and career opportunities.

Lilian Katz shares reflections on the effectiveness of teacher training and education. What we don't know on this topic may surprise you! Recent developments in training and education include the Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) and Bilingual Early Childhood Certification Assistance Program (BECCA). Read about these professional development opportunities and how they affect practitioners.

As Gateways celebrates its third birthday, a quick review of Gateways seems in order. Gateways to Opportunity was designed as a system that uses a career lattice as its framework. A career lattice schematic allows for flexibility as practitioners make choices based on ongoing training and education, evolving professional development, and career opportunities. This issue of Inside Gateways clearly demonstrates the career lattice concept by profiling two highly recognized early care and education professionals from IDHS: Holly Knicker and Anne Wharff.

Inside Gateways is one of many valued components of Gateways to Opportunity. I hope that you set aside time to read this issue to keep up-to-date with the state's constantly changing landscape of early care and education. And please join me in saying **Happy Birthday to Gateways to Opportunity** along with wishes that Gateways will continue to celebrate many more years as a recognized leader in the field!

Joni Scritchlow and Your
Gateways to Opportunity
Professional Development Team

Profiles in Leadership

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

In this issue of *Inside Gateways*, we profile two long-time early care and education professionals in the Bureau of Child Care and Development at the Illinois Department of Human Services.

Holly Knicker



Successful college preparation, experience, and effective supervision matter. These are among the lessons Holly Knicker has learned over the course of her professional career in early care and education. Holly is currently the Child Care Quality Manager for the Bureau of Child Care and Development at the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). In that role, Holly manages the federal funds that support child care quality in Illinois. She and her staff provide oversight of IDHS-funded activities conducted by the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), as well as additional services related to quality. When she accepted her position at IDHS in 1999, Holly knew firsthand how a CCR&R can influence child care quality at the community level through its work with parents, child care providers, and employers. Holly was the director of the CCR&R agency in McHenry County for 9 years before coming to IDHS.

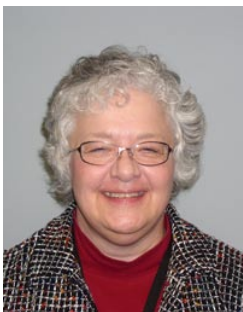
Holly graduated from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, in 1981 with a bachelor's degree in psychology with a concentration in day care administration. Her degree has helped her secure every professional position she has held, including her current position at IDHS. After working in a child care center as a teacher of 2-year-olds, Holly accepted a director position at a full-time child care program in the St. Louis area. When Holly's family later moved back to northern Illinois, she accepted a second director position at a full-time child care program in McHenry County.

During a family leave to care for their third child at home, Holly contacted a local community college to see if they had openings for a part-time instructor. She taught early care and education courses at McHenry County Community College for the next 8 years. During that time, her supervisor at the college recommended Holly for the director position of the newly developed McHenry County CCR&R. As the director and initially the only employee, Holly learned all the programmatic and fiscal aspects of a CCR&R agency. With leadership from Holly and her supervisors, the McHenry County CCR&R grew over the next 9 years. That experience helped prepare her for the Child Care Quality Manager position when it became available at IDHS in 1999.

The opportunities at IDHS enabled Holly to move into a position that provided professional challenges and allowed for input on statewide child care program development, policies, and procedures. Holly experienced a learning curve when she made the shift from being the director of a state-contracted CCR&R program to working in the agency that did the contracting, IDHS. Holly had to learn how to work within a large state government agency, how processes take place, and how decisions get made within the infrastructure of IDHS.

Over the years, Holly has been fortunate to work with many staff and supervisors who are dedicated to improving the lives of children and families. Some management skills stand out as being particularly effective, including those of her current supervisor at IDHS. Holly has found that the most effective supervisors communicate clearly, take time to explain the "hows" and "whys" of areas of responsibility, grant autonomy in those areas where a staff member has strengths, and work with staff in those areas where support is needed. Holly tries to emulate these same qualities for the staff she supervises at IDHS.

Anne Wharff



Teacher, education coordinator, director, licensing representative, day care coordinator, school age specialist, child care subsidy specialist, professional development coordinator— over her professional career of nearly 35 years, Anne Wharff has held a wide variety of positions in the early care and education field. How did Anne's career path evolve? What helps her maintain her focus, her calm, and her good humor after so many years?

Anne Wharff is currently the Professional Development Coordinator in the Bureau of Child Care and Development at the Illinois Department of Human Services. In that capacity, Anne oversees and provides leadership to the early care and education professional development initiatives of various statewide groups (e.g., INCCRRA, CCR&Rs, Gateways to Opportunity).

Anne received a bachelor's degree in child development from Iowa State University in 1974. As part of her undergraduate education, Anne completed a practicum experience in Peoria at a preschool center where children had special needs. This eye-opening experience ultimately led her to accept a position upon graduation in a child care center in Peoria run by the Salvation Army. Anne worked as a teacher and as the Education Coordinator at that center from 1974 until 1977, when she became the center's director. In 1980, Anne took a position as a licensing representative for DCFS in the Peoria region, and after 8 years she became the Regional Day Care Coordinator for DCFS, monitoring DCFS site-administered contracts and region-administered child care programs. As Regional Day Care Coordinator, Anne was invited to serve on numerous United Way committees to support quality improvements

in community-based child care programs in the region. Through that work, Anne gained experience in helping diverse groups come together to support high-quality child care programs.

In 1991, Anne was invited to apply for the School-Age Coordinator position within the Office of Child Development in Springfield to administer the school-age grants that were part of the federal Dependent Care Grant. That position taught Anne a great deal about school-age child care services around the state. In 1992, Anne became the manager of the Dependent Care Grant, which was expanded to include quality improvement activities for the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies.

Under the purview of the newly formed [Illinois Department of Human Services](#) (IDHS), Anne's position evolved to include policy and technical assistance in the child care subsidy program in 1997. Anne was interested in the statewide trends in the child care assistance program, but she missed using her child development expertise. In 2002, Anne took the opportunity to move from child care subsidy work to her current position as Professional Development Coordinator within IDHS. Since that time, Anne has helped to grow and monitor a variety of statewide programs that address child care quality, particularly those involving professional development. A central aspect of Anne's position is to ensure that the major statewide early care and education sectors (e.g., IDHS, ISBE, and Head Start) are at the professional development table and collaborating on a common goal of improved care and education for young children and their families.

Working in early care and education for over three decades can be draining, and Anne concedes there are challenges working in state government. Focusing on both the big picture in the early care and education landscape and the smallest picture of the child—as well as taking time to pursue personal interests and to travel—helps Anne remain upbeat about her work and hopeful for the future.

Lilian Katz: Reflections

Does Teacher Training Matter?

Introduction

The question “Does teacher training matter?” is not new. The question can be traced back at least 50 years in reference to training for teachers at every level. In fact, criticism of the effectiveness of professional training in *all* fields goes back a long way.

For example, years ago, while we were living in California, my late husband completed a degree in civil engineering, studying for years the science of how to design buildings to withstand earthquakes, fires, and other stresses. But on the first day of his employment, his boss said, “OK, you're in the real world now. We have to meet the state building code standards, but if we want to win contracts, our designs have to come up with much lower construction costs than our competitors do.” As Grossman¹ points out in a recent review of research challenging the effectiveness of teacher education at every level, lawyers and social workers also report that they learn what is really needed to practice their professions only after they are “on the job.”

But not all of the problems with teacher education are common to all professions. In discussions of elementary and secondary teacher training, there is much emphasis on teachers' “really knowing the subject” they are to teach. But what would that be for pre-K teachers? How much expertise should they have in all the subjects likely to be involved in an early childhood curriculum? Most early childhood teacher education programs emphasize learning child development and teaching methods rather than mastery of subjects like mathematics and science. These subjects are usually covered in methods or curriculum courses.

Another big issue in assessing the effectiveness of teacher training in early childhood education is what criteria of effectiveness should be used. Should preschoolers be given tests in order to evaluate teacher effectiveness and, by implication, the education that the teachers have received? Even if useful tests were available, many possible factors might account for the test scores. First and foremost, young children are notoriously poor test-takers. Second, a wide range of factors contribute to test results—differences in the mother's education, family socioeconomic status, and second language learning, among others. In addition, evidence points to relationships between the training, qualifications, and pay of preschool teachers and the kinds of settings in which they are likely to be employed (e.g., private schools, public schools, Head Start programs, laboratory schools). These diverse settings vary in the quality

of the environment, equipment, support services, parental involvement, teacher salaries, in-service training opportunities, mentoring, and in many other ways that may over-ride the effects of teacher training.

In a review of research studies published between 1980 and 2005,² the authors reported significant positive effects of specialized training on the competence of caregivers in child care facilities. They found some support for a “causal link between caregiver training, caregiver competencies and child behavior in childcare...” (p. 294). Their findings led them to advocate emphasis on “the inclusion of instruction related to teacher-child interaction in the curriculum of vocational training for caregivers” (p. 294). They conclude that their study provides “support for the direct causal link from caregiver training to improvement of caregiver competencies” (p. 305) and the quality of provisions for young children (see also de Schipper et al., 2007).³

In order to be able to make sound scientifically based claims about the contribution of teacher training to the effectiveness of an early childhood program, we would need extensive studies of teachers with a wide range of experience and training. The teachers would need to be randomly assigned to diverse kinds early childhood settings (e.g., private, public, Head Start, parochial) in which a wide variety of variables were controlled (e.g., quality of space, equipment, ratio of adults to children, curriculum being implemented). The cost and complexity of such a research undertaking is daunting, to say the least, and to the best of my knowledge, such studies have not been attempted to date.

The issues here might be clarified by taking time to share retrospective evaluations of our own training. Which experiences do we, in retrospect, think contributed most to our own professional competence?

The individuals featured in the “Profiles in Leadership” section of this issue of *Inside Gateways* — [Holly Knicker](#) and [Anne Wharff](#) — and those featured in the previous issue — [Cass Wolfe](#) and [Jeanne Anderson](#) — illustrate the important interplay of formal education and on-the-job experiences that help to prepare early care and education professionals for leadership positions. If you know of someone whose experience would be useful to share in future “Profiles in Leadership” features, [please let us know](#).

Notes

1. Grossman, Pam. (2008). Responding to our critics: From crisis to opportunity in research on teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(1), 10-23.
2. Fukkink, Ruben G., & Lont, Anna. (2007). Does training matter? A meta-analysis and review of caregiver training studies. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 22(3), 294-311.
3. de Schipper, Elles J.; Riksen-Walraven, J. Marianne; & Geurts, Sabine A. E. (2007). Multiple determinants of caregiver behavior in child care centers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 22(3), 312-326.

Current Early Care and Education Initiatives

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

Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

There is [increasing evidence](#) that a [four-year college](#) degree in early childhood education or a related field is the best preparation to teach young children. And, in fact, there is a [national trend to raise teacher qualifications](#) in early childhood programs. Yet, the cost of a four-year college degree is beyond the financial budgets of many, particularly when measured against the [expected salaries of those teaching in early childhood programs](#).

The newly developed Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degree in Early Childhood Education (ECE) is an effort to increase the numbers of early childhood teachers with four-year college degrees by creating a pathway between two- and four-year institutions of higher education. Students enrolled in an AAT degree program can expect to have equal

status when they transfer at the beginning of their junior year with students who began college at the four-year institution—so-called native students.

The AAT in ECE has evolved over the course of several years, and as with most new initiatives, it is the result of the efforts of many individuals. The passage of House Resolution (HR) 845 in June of 2004 provided a legislative directive and an impetus to develop articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions of higher education, a critical element of the AAT degree.

The negotiations and discussions leading up to the AAT in ECE were time-consuming for good reason. Since the AAT degree transfers as a “package” of courses, two- and four-year institutions needed to feel confident that the “package” contained the general education and the professional education course components necessary for a meaningful and valid BA degree in Early Childhood Education. Details of the proposed model of the AAT in Early Childhood Education can be found at http://www.illinoiseducator.illinois.edu/special/aat_ece1.pdf.

The process of developing the AAT degree in ECE was successful on many levels. Today, four institutions of higher education have AAT degree programs in place—Black Hawk College, Illinois Valley Community College, Lincoln Land Community College, and Oakton Community College. Applications for an AAT degree in ECE are in process at Lake Land College, Morton College, Rend Lake College, Southwestern Illinois College, and Triton College. A regional conference on the AAT model was held in Chicago on October 5, 2007. That conference was sponsored by the [Illinois Community College Board](#) and the [Illinois Board of Higher Education](#) and resulted in several more requests for information about developing AAT programs. A second regional conference on the AAT model is planned for March 28, 2008, in southern Illinois. The exact location is yet to be determined.

In addition to these successes, the process of developing the AAT model in ECE also helped bring together education faculty from various institutions of higher education around the state, many of whom had never before discussed issues of professional preparation of students. These discussions have led to other promising collaborations for those entering the field of early care and education.

For more information, contact

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Bilingual Early Childhood Certification Assistance Program (BECCA)

[The Bilingual Early Childhood Certification Assistance Program](#) (BECCA), administered by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), was started in 2007 to increase the number of certified and highly qualified bilingual early childhood teachers in Lake and McHenry Counties.

Applicants to the BECCA program must meet certain criteria. In addition to having a desire to work with young children, applicants must have at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution in any field, be fluent in English and Spanish (or another target language), have the ability to pass state certification exams (e.g., Basic Skills Test, Target Language Proficiency Test), meet the requirements for admission to the Northern Illinois University Graduate School, be a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident, and be committed to teaching in any publicly funded PreK-3 program in Lake or McHenry County for at least three years upon completion of the BECCA program (which includes time spent teaching while enrolled in the program).

BECCA currently has a cohort of 30 participants. These individuals came to their interest in teaching in an early childhood bilingual classroom from different paths. Many came from another teaching profession. Others came from the social service field, or the legal, marketing, and retail trades. The current BECCA cohort is working on a sequence of 19 courses, which are scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2010. The curriculum is offered through Northern Illinois University (NIU) but held at University Center of Lake County in Grayslake on two evenings per week. Participants experience being on the NIU campus on “visitation days” that are scheduled periodically for participants to meet with NIU's Dean of Education and with various education faculty. Upon completion of the program, BECCA participants will earn an M.S.Ed. in Literacy Education from NIU with an emphasis in ESL/bilingual education and

meet the requirements for the TYPE 04 Early Childhood certification along with teaching approvals for ESL and bilingual education.

The BECCA program pays full tuition and fees for its participants. Program participants must pay the costs of textbooks, transportation, and fees for state certification applications and tests. To help participants experience success, BECCA provides an e-mentor who taught in the field of English Language Learning (ELL) for many years and can respond to individual questions about transitioning to an early childhood classroom setting, planning appropriate activities, and addressing behavior challenges. The e-mentor can also conduct on-site observations of BECCA participants in their respective early childhood classrooms, if needed. An interactive Web site provides resources and facilitates discussions among BECCA participants. Although BECCA participants are responsible for finding their own employment upon completion of the program, the interactive Web site is also a place where position notices are posted. For those needing assistance passing the Basic Skills Test (required of BECCA participants), several testing preparation workshops are offered by NIU staff members throughout the year.

BECCA shares administrative similarities with the [Bilingual Transition to K-8 Teaching Project](#) (BTTT), another ISBE-funded program. BECCA and BTTT differ in one important aspect: BTTT stipulates that its graduates teach in the Chicago Public Schools or in one of 12 partner school districts. Graduates of the BECCA project, however, have greater flexibility and can teach in any publicly funded PreK-3 program in Lake or McHenry County.

The BECCA program coordinators hope that the early success of the program participants and the continued demand for highly qualified bilingual early childhood teachers in Illinois will help insure its continuation after the initial cohort graduates, but future funding of the program is uncertain at this time.

For more information, contact

Bilingual Early Childhood Certification Assistance Program (BECCA)
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lcardenas@thecenterweb.org
<http://thansitiontoteaching.com>

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

Caregiver Well-Being Affects Academic Achievement
<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/%7Esnapshots/snap48.pdf>

A Center Piece of the PreK Puzzle: Providing State Prekindergarten in Child Care Centers
<http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/NWLCPreKReport2007.pdf>

Enriching Children, Enriching the Nation: Illinois Summary
<http://www.epi.org/books/enriching/states/il.pdf>

Making the Grade: Making the Case for Well-Educated, Well-Trained Teaching Staff in Early Care and Education
http://www.wccf.org/pdf/making_the_grade.pdf

Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings from the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs
<http://www.policystudies.com/studies/youth/Promising%20Programs%20FINAL.pdf>

Research on Early Childhood Education Outcomes
<http://www.publicpolicyforum.org/Matrix.htm>

Research Synthesis Points on Early Childhood Inclusion
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~npdci/assets/media/products/NDPCI_ResearchSynthesis_9-2007.pdf

A Science-Based Framework for Early Childhood Policy: Using Evidence to Improve Outcomes in Learning, Behavior, and Health for Vulnerable Children (1.9 MB)

http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu/content/downloads/Policy_Framework.pdf

Career Opportunities and Job Links

Bureau of Labor Statistics: Teachers—Preschool, Kindergarten, Elementary, Middle, and Secondary

<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos069.htm>

Bureau of Labor Statistics: Child Care Workers

<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos170.htm>

Illinois Association of School Administrators Job Bank

<http://www.illinoiseducationjobbank.org/pages/>

National Association for the Education of Young Children Career Forum

<http://www.naeyc.org/careerforum/>