



Summer 2009

Greetings! Welcome to the summer edition of Inside Gateways—your quarterly e-newsletter.

Please take a few minutes and respond to the **online survey** about *Inside Gateways*...your opinion will help us provide future articles and information of interest to our readers.

In April, the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) issued a joint position statement on early childhood inclusion. This position statement was facilitated by the National Professional Development Center for Inclusion in response to the increasing number of infant and young children with disabilities in our early childhood programs and the lack of a shared, national definition of inclusion. Years ago, most early childhood practices separated children with disabilities from other children. And although federal legislation (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act—IDEA) has changed the way services are now offered, we still lack a common definition of early childhood inclusion. In order to move forward in providing consistent, high-quality services across all settings, it is imperative that we come to an agreement on the meaning and definition of early childhood inclusion.

Please take the time to read this important **position statement**. Think about how a universally applied common concept of inclusion might benefit children and families. After all, our primary goal is providing the highest quality of service in our early childhood programs—for all children.

Learn more about the Illinois early intervention system and three leaders in our state who work in this arena from Profiles in Leadership in this edition of *Inside Gateways*.

Early intervention today is a “hot topic” in Illinois and across the nation. As federal and state budgets are planned (and trimmed!), there is widespread recognition that early intervention provides lasting benefits that outweigh the cost. However, a deficit budget means that program cuts to critical services are happening.

In our current era of state budget challenges, we cannot lose our focus on what is best for children and families. Monitor bills and pending legislation on a regular basis, and let your legislator know how to better support services and programs for children and families. Now more than ever, during the Illinois budget crisis, an informed opinion can make a difference.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joni".

Joni Scritchlow and the
Gateways to Opportunity
Professional Development Team

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 available in early care and education and school-age and youth programs.

In this issue of *Inside Gateways*, we profile three professionals who work in the area of early intervention (EI). Rob Derry is the project manager for the Illinois Early Intervention Credentialing Office, Provider Connections. Ted Burke is the director of the Illinois Early Intervention Training Program. Susan Fowler is the new director of the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse.

Early Intervention in Illinois

In Illinois, early intervention (for young children from birth to age 3) focuses on providing supports and techniques in content areas identified as priorities by the State of Illinois and that reflect outcomes required by the federal government. These outcomes for very young children include (1) developing positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships), (2) acquiring and using knowledge and skills (including early language/communication), and (3) using appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

With respect to family outcomes, EI programs are required to report annually to the federal government the percentage of families participating in EI who report that EI services have helped their families in the following ways: (1) knowing their rights, (2) effectively communicating their children's needs, and (3) helping their children develop and learn.

Illinois has historically reported on more than the required outcomes in its annual performance report. The state also assesses and reports on the extent to which infants, toddlers, and their families are receiving services in *natural environments*—that is, in the same places that children who are normally developing and their families would be served. Other issues identified in the state's **2008 Illinois Annual Performance Report (APR)** that are critical to the successful implementation of EI services include the processes involved in the early identification of children eligible for services (child find); timely delivery of services, once eligibility is established; timely transition of children at age 36 months (and their families) from EI to other appropriate services; and the resolution of complaints from families. Another crucial implementation issue for EI in Illinois currently involves financing of services, which impacts both families and providers, and also influences the format and frequency of service delivery.

The Illinois early intervention system includes several components that are discussed briefly in the profiles in this issue—the EI Credentialing Office, called Provider Connections; the EI Training Program; the EI Clearinghouse; and the new National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI).

Rob Derry



Rob has observed a number of changes in the early intervention system in Illinois in recent years.

Rob Derry is the project manager for the Early Intervention (EI) Credentialing Office, Provider Connections. The office is located at the **Center for Best Practices in Early Childhood Education** at Western Illinois University (WIU) and is responsible for credentialing all EI providers statewide. EI providers include speech, physical, occupational, and developmental therapists; social workers; counselors; and psychologists. The EI Credential is an Illinois-specific credential that enables EI providers to bill the state for their EI services. The **EI Credentialing Office** has a number of resources available to those interested in becoming an EI

provider.

The EI Credentialing Office works closely with the EI Clearinghouse, which is a resource library for EI providers and families, and the EI Training Program, which provides training required by the state's EI system. The EI Credentialing Office, the EI Clearinghouse, and the EI Training Program are funded separately by the **Illinois Department of Human Services** (IDHS). (The EI Clearinghouse and the EI Training Program are discussed elsewhere in this issue.)

Rob began his professional career as a specialized foster care caseworker and as a child and adolescent mental health counselor. In those roles, Rob became familiar with EI state resources and with the challenges facing caseworkers in EI. The opportunity to work on the system side of EI became available when the Provider Connections program came to WIU 12 years ago. "The EI system in Illinois has changed dramatically in recent years," Rob says. "The emphasis on the social-emotional development of children birth to age 3 has had an enormous and positive impact on the EI system in Illinois. Other changes that have had a significant impact on the EI system are the development and implementation of **EI Rule 500** and the requirement of fingerprint background checks and child abuse background checks for all EI providers in the system."

Ted Burke



Ted's focus on the family perspective in EI professional development makes the Illinois Early Intervention Training Program different from other states.

Ted Burke is the director of the **Illinois Early Intervention Training Program**. The Illinois Early Intervention Training Program receives funds from the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) to offer training and technical assistance to all providers who work in the Illinois EI system. The EI system includes the programs that operate under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) serving children birth to age 3. The Illinois EI Training Program provides training statewide. The program's main office is in Tinley Park and is part of the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Greater Chicago, which acts as the program's

fiscal agent.

Ted serves on many boards and committees that focus on children with disabilities and is currently the chair of the **Early Childhood Information Technology Committee for the Division of Exceptional Children** (DEC).

When Ted became director in 2001, he knew that most EI providers received their preservice training in a child-focused, medically based therapy model and that the EI Training Program would need to offer training that emphasized a family-focused child development model. "I knew it is important to think about what will benefit the family once the therapists finish providing their services." To facilitate that shift, Ted changed the makeup of the team of EI trainers to include more parents. "Over half of our trainers in a given year are individuals who have children of their own with disabilities. Embedding that direct parent perspective in all of our training opportunities makes the Illinois EI Training Program unique from other states." Ted concedes that from an administrator's point of view it would be simpler to have a smaller team of trainers who were responsible for all statewide professional development. He believes, however, that the quality and effectiveness of the training would suffer with such a model.

Ted's emphasis on the parent component in EI training evolved from his own experience as child of a parent with a disability. "My mother had multiple sclerosis. I grew up with a mom in a wheelchair and from an early age was aware of what services and accommodations were—and and were not—available to those with disabilities."

Ted did not begin his career in special education. He went to college to study political science and worked as a legislative aide for the state assembly in New York, where he was living at the time. Ted worked for the head of the education committee. His first exposure to the special education field was from a public policy viewpoint. Ted then became a community organizer for a settlement house in Rochester, New

York. "I don't have a master's degree, but I always say that my settlement house experience was my master's degree in the social service field. Anyone who ever worked at a settlement house or knows the history of the settlement house movement in this country will know what I mean." When funding was eliminated for the settlement house in 1991, Ted moved to Rockford, Illinois, where he became the assistant director of the Head Start program. "Head Start's involvement with local interagency councils and community access points of entry gave me my first experience working in EI."

Ted entered the state's EI system just as **STARNET**—the system that provides training and support for families who have children birth to age 8 with special needs—was working with local areas to plan for system points of entry to EI for Illinois families. These would later come to be known as the 25 Child and Family Connections Offices that provide service coordination for families receiving EI services in Illinois. Ted became an EI resource specialist, providing consultation and training for the STARNET system. "I lucked out in my early years with STARNET. I worked with professionals who were well known within and outside Illinois. Jeannette McCollum, Tweety Yates, and Anne Shannon were among the folks who helped broaden my perspective about the field of EI. They taught me about best practice and research in EI as well as the importance of the family perspective."

Ted believes that the field of EI is at a crossroads nationwide, partly driven by the current economic crisis and the emphasis on connecting outcomes to dollars. "Change does not occur without some tension. We have an opportunity to take a look at our EI system and make it better. If Illinois were the only state experiencing serious budget problems, I would be more worried. Many states I travel to are experiencing similar economic problems. As policy makers consider the fiscal impact of EI, we have an opportunity to take a step back and look at the quality of services we are providing as well. If we can provide better services for families for less money, that would be a good thing."

Susan Fowler



Early intervention and special education services for children with disabilities and their families have been the focus of Susan's professional career.

Susan Fowler is a professor of special education at the **University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign** and beginning in August 2009 the new director of the **Illinois Early Intervention (EI) Clearinghouse**. The Illinois Public Health Association operated the Clearinghouse for many years; in August 2009 the EI Clearinghouse will move to the University of Illinois Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative. ECAP will work to minimize interruptions of service during the transition, and the EI Clearinghouse is expected to be fully operational at ECAP by

October 1, 2009. The EI Clearinghouse will continue to identify, collect, and disseminate research-based and best-practice materials and information on EI for parents, practitioners, and EI professionals in Illinois in the coming years. For more information on the transition, please visit eic.crc.uiuc.edu.

At the University, Susan works with students who are preparing for careers in EI and early childhood special education, and she works with graduate students who do research in the area of EI and preschool services. Susan also provides professional development at national and state conferences related to the topic of transition from EI services into preschool and from preschool into kindergarten. She just completed a term as president of the **Council for Exceptional Children** (CEC), the largest international organization for special education professionals.

Susan joined the University of Illinois faculty in 1990. She was head of the Department of Special Education from 1990 to 1996 and dean of the College of Education from 2000 to 2006. In 2006, Susan resumed teaching and research within the College. She also became principal investigator for projects within the **Early Childhood and Parenting (ECAP) Collaborative**, a unit within the College. Susan is currently co-principal investigator for the **Developing Early Literacy and Language in Danville** (DELL-D) Project, and principal investigator for the **Illinois Early Learning Project** (IEL), the **Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map** (IECAM) Project, and, beginning in August of 2009, the **Illinois Early Intervention (EI) Clearinghouse**.

Susan began her career as an early childhood teacher in 1974, working with young children with autism and significant language delays. “My experience as a teacher of preschool children with disabilities confirmed that the sooner services started for children and their families, the better the outcomes.” After completing her Ph.D. in developmental and child psychology at the University of Kansas, Susan directed a federally funded demonstration preschool program for children with significant language impairments from 1980 to 1988. During this time, Susan also directed several federal grants through the **Office of Special Education Programs** (OSEP), which enabled her and her colleagues to develop procedures for coordinating service delivery for families when they brought their infants home from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and entered community EI programs, and then as they moved from EI services to preschool and from early childhood special education to kindergarten.

In 1988, after the passage of PL 99-457, which authorized EI and guaranteed free and appropriate public education for all 3- to 5-year-olds with disabilities, Susan was invited to work at OSEP on a short-term appointment to direct the Early Childhood Branch. The Early Childhood Branch was in the midst of the first year of distributing funding to states for Part H (now Part C) early intervention programs, expanding the preschool (Part B of 619) program in all states, and providing research, demonstration, and technical assistance funds to support the development of the preschool and EI service system. When she left her position at the federal level, Susan moved to the University of Illinois to become head of the Department of Special Education.

During this time, Susan’s personal life experiences converged with her professional life experiences. In 1993, she became the mother of a premature baby who spent 61 days in the NICU. Susan struggled to obtain necessary EI services for her son following his discharge from the NICU. He continued to receive occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), and speech therapy (ST) well into early grade school. “My personal and professional perspectives on special education clearly informed one another from this point forward.”

In 1997, Susan became the principal investigator of the **Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services Early Childhood Research Institute (CLAS)**—a multi-university effort to identify materials, curricula, training guides, and parent manuals that addressed early intervention and preschool services in a culturally and linguistically sensitive way.

“A theme throughout my professional career has been to insure that families and children receiving early intervention services continue to receive services after children turn 3 years of age. I am excited about our new affiliation with the Illinois EI Clearinghouse, which will allow us to provide research-based and best-practice early intervention (EI) information for parents, practitioners, and EI professionals in Illinois. The goals we have for the EI Clearinghouse complement the information and services we provide through the Illinois Early Learning and the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map projects.”

Susan points out that the new location for the EI Clearinghouse in the Children’s Research Center houses other initiatives directed by well-known Illinois EI professionals, including Jeanette McCollum and Tweety Yates, who are both affiliated with the EI Clearinghouse. The location is easily accessible from I-57, I-72, and I-74, and ample parking is available. Of course, parents and professionals who use the EI Clearinghouse materials through their local libraries, by phone, or on the Web will continue to be able to do so. The transition of the EI Clearinghouse and its materials to ECAP on the University of Illinois campus will be complete by October 1, 2009. The current Web site for the **EI Clearinghouse** is located at www.eiclearinghouse.org, and materials will continue to be available from the EI Clearinghouse in Springfield until the materials are moved to ECAP on the University of Illinois campus sometime in August. An **interim page** containing frequently updated information on the transition of the EI Clearinghouse from IPHA in Springfield to ECAP in Champaign is available at eic.crc.uiuc.edu.

Lilian Katz: Reflections

Making the Most of a Short Preschool Day

One of the topics that often comes up during discussions with Illinois preschool and kindergarten teachers is how best to use the time available in a **part-time program**. Another frequent question is how to address all of our state early learning standards in the little time available. But with only 2-1/2 hours a day—and all the daily toileting, handwashing, and snack times—little time remains for involving the children in activities that are meaningful and that help them meet benchmarks. Teachers in inclusive classrooms also are required to make certain that the children who have special needs are able to meet the goals in their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

A first recommendation is to drop the **calendar ritual**. In most classes for young children, as many as 20 minutes a day are allocated to talk about the calendar in ways that have little if any value to children under 6 years old. Any benchmark that a teacher wants to address during calendar time can be met in other activities that engage children's intellects. Ideally, young children should have a brief daily group time to talk about topics that interest the whole class, to make plans, and perhaps sing a few songs. It would also be ideal in a part-time program to include daily outdoor and general physical activity time, and certainly a story time.

Another approach that I recommend is to engage the children in extended investigations, or **projects**. Good projects can last anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. Project work can cover all the learning areas in the Illinois Early Learning Standards and address all the benchmarks. (To find out more about projects and learning standards, you might want to read "**Linking Standards and Engaged Learning in the Early Years**" by Judy Harris Helm and Gaye Gronlund.)

Teachers in part-time programs sometimes question the feasibility of doing project work given the constraints of the short day. Some teachers in part-time programs devote most of their Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays to project work. On those days, children can spend much of the time on the project topic: planning, doing fieldwork, sketching, creating graphs, and talking to experts. Periodic group meetings can be helpful, during which small groups of children working on specific subtopics of the larger project can report on their progress to the others and solicit their suggestions and assistance. During the progress of the project, Tuesdays and Thursdays can be used for other curriculum activities, group time for music and stories, and perhaps outdoor activities that are missed on the other days. Bear in mind that of course teachers can select books and music to share that are related to the project, and that children may be able to do many project-related tasks outdoors.

Many teachers have indicated that this way of coping with the short time available seems to work well for their curriculum plans, for addressing state standards, and for providing the children with a wide variety of experiences from which they can benefit.

For a more in-depth look at doing projects in part-time programs, you might want to take a look at two articles by Sallee Beneke: "**Bringing Project Work to a Community College**" and "**Implementing the Project Approach in Part-time Early Childhood Education Programs.**"

Current Early Care and Education (ECE) and School-Age and Youth (SAY) 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.

National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI)

In June 2008, Illinois was selected to be a state partner by the **National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI)**. The primary objective of the three-year, cross-agency NPDCI-Illinois grant is to ensure that the providers of professional development in Illinois have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to provide professional development to practitioners working with children who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse. (NPDCI is a project of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs [OSEP] in the U.S. Department of Education.)

NPDCI-Illinois has three goals for implementing a professional development system that supports high-quality inclusive environments. The first goal is to create blended professional development competencies that intentionally emphasize cultural, linguistic, and ability diversity. In close partnership with **ACCESS**, a national association of early childhood associate degree faculty, NPDCI-Illinois initially focused on blending early childhood general and special education standards within seven core courses identified as central to the early childhood education community college curriculum. These revised courses will be recommended for use by two-year institutions of higher education in Illinois. The Community College Board is also reviewing these revised, blended core courses to determine whether they will be required for the new **Associate of Arts in Teaching** degree.

A second goal of NPDCI-Illinois is to examine existing professional development efforts around the state to understand who is providing what kind of professional development to which audiences (e.g., teacher educators, students, practitioners, families). The results of "**The Landscape: A Statewide Survey for Providers of Professional Development in Early Childhood**" will be available this coming fall.

A final goal of NPDCI-Illinois is to build the capacity for faculty of two- and four-year institutions of higher education to help them prepare future personnel to work effectively with children and families who are culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse. This effort will begin in October at the **Sharing a Vision Conference** with a faculty training institute for faculty at two-year institutions, and it will be further informed and developed based on the results of the "Landscape Survey" and input from the **NPDCI-Illinois Steering Committee**.

For more information about the Illinois National Professional Development Center on Inclusion, contact:

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New Gateways Resources

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

Advocacy

Illinois After-School Alliance

www.icvp.org/afterschoolalliance.asp

Early Childhood and School-Age and Youth Development Initiatives

Illinois After-School Partnership

www.illinoisafterschool.net/index.asp

Quality Benchmark for Cultural Competence Project

www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/state/QBBC%20Tool%20FINAL%20609.pdf

Research Reports

2007 Report on Child Care in Cook County: Elements of Child Care Supply and Demand

www.actforchildren.org/files/reports/childcare.supplydemand.2008.pdf

Covering Pre-K ? New Investments in Our Littlest Learners

hechinger.tc.columbia.edu/default.aspx?pageid=778

Why Isn't Johnny in Preschool?

cofonline.org/files/earlylearningreport.pdf

Research Centers

Child Trends

www.childtrends.org/index.cfm

Harvard Family Research Project

www.hfrp.org