



Spring 2009

Greetings! Welcome to the latest edition of the Gateways to Opportunity quarterly e-newsletter.

Please take a few minutes and complete the *Inside Gateways* **survey**. Information that you provide will help shape the content of future issues of Inside Gateways. We want to know what features you utilize and enjoy, and we want to find out how Inside Gateways can evolve to better meet your needs.

This issue of Inside Gateways includes a variety of articles that relate to change: change in alignment of curriculum (think “bottom up” versus “top down”), change within the Gateways to Opportunity Professional Development System to include those who serve children birth to age 21, and changes in leadership. In fact, 2009 has been a year of continual change at multiple levels in our personal and professional lives. Significant changes in our economy have caused a ripple effect and impacted employment, changed how government/program/personal budgets are allocated, impacted job opportunities, and changed the political landscape. Now more than ever, in these times of rapid change, it is critical that we monitor proposed changes in legislation, licensing, and programs—as well as proposals related to stimulus funding.

As individuals in our democratic society, we have always had an opportunity to voice opinions. In this time of rapid change, I think the potential is even greater to make a difference. Right now, we each have an opportunity to impact changing policies and legislation. During times of uncertainty, most of us tend to focus inward. But in doing so, we lose this opportunity to track the progress of government and program decisions that will impact each of us, our families, and programs, for years to come. Take the time—monitor decisions that will shape our future. The opening page of the Gateways Web site (www.ilgateways.com) contains links to advocacy sites that review proposed legislation related to early care and education and school-age and youth funding and programs. From Gateways, you can also link directly to Web sites that allow you to track current legislation and bills as they move between the House and Senate.

Change is with us every day. Today, make your opinion heard and impact the changes in our future.

Thank you for all that you do for children and families...Enjoy!

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 two individuals who work with school-age and youth development programs. Mike Heathfield is a professor and coordinator of Social Work and Youth Programs at Harold Washington College in Chicago. Stacie Haley is the director of the Tazewell Out of School Time program for the Tazewell County Health Department.

Mike Heathfield



Mike's recognition that "people don't stop developing at 13 years of age" forms the basis of his long and accomplished career in school-age and youth work programs.

Mike Heathfield is a full-time professor and coordinator of Social Work and Youth Work Programs at **Harold Washington College in Chicago**. Mike designed and helped to fund and implement the Youth Development Practitioner Certification Program for the City of Chicago. Mike is currently the national co-chair of the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition, along with Ellen Gannett of the **National Institute on Out-of-School Time** (NIOST). Mike is also co-chair of the Core Knowledge Committee for the Illinois School-Age and Youth (I-SAY) **Credential**.

Mike began his career with school-age and youth as a high school teacher years ago in Braintree, Essex, England. On the same school campus was a youth center. "During my years teaching high school, I discovered that I preferred the same youth in my interactions with them in the youth center during the evening hours than I did as a teacher in the more formal high school classroom setting during the day hours." After teaching high school, Mike worked in several other communities in England across the United Kingdom, including a theater arts program in Scotland. "I was an adult learner whose interest in learning was reignited later in life." After going back to college in his mid-30s, Mike completed a master's degree in social work and in philosophy and a doctorate in education.

Mike's interest in pursuing his education was motivated in part by a college teacher who gained his respect as a youth worker and as an academic. "If we want to draw adult learners to college, it is extremely important that we have professors with practical expertise that connects with youth workers, professors who are viewed as credible about their subject area."

Mike is hopeful about the future for school-age and youth programs. "I just returned from the **National AfterSchool Association Convention** in New Orleans. There appears to be a growing investment in after-school and youth work nationally. As a nation, we are beginning to recognize that people don't stop developing at 13 years of age. The journey to successful adulthood begins in early childhood and continues well beyond the teenage years. Good youth workers are really skilled at connecting the disconnected...those young people who are excluded or judged to be failing."

Mike is encouraged by the shift in **Gateways to Opportunity** to encompass professional development for those who work with young children and youth from birth to age 21. "The quality of programs for school-age and youth is directly related to the quality of those who work in those programs. There are a surprising number of parallels between professional development for those working with young children and those working with school-age and youth. We have a great deal to learn from one another."

Stacie Haley



Stacie believes that professionalizing the field of school-age and youth development will help reduce staff turnover and increase program quality.

Stacie Haley is the director of the Tazewell Out of School Time program for the **Tazewell County Health Department**. In her role, Stacie administers before- and after-school programs in 19 schools throughout Tazewell County. The programs that Stacie oversees serve 1,800 youth between the ages of 3 and 15 years. Some of the programs receive Teen Reach funds, and some are supported entirely by parent fees. Stacie is responsible for overseeing programming in all 19 schools, as well as hiring and providing professional development for 54 staff who work in those programs. "We try to align our after-school curriculum with the academics provided during the school day by offering a lot of recreational and cultural enrichment activities, as well as lessons in life skills, mentoring, and service learning."

A significant part of Stacie's job is acting as a liaison to district partners and agencies in the communities where their programs are located. These include the school principals and superintendents, as well as any community agency that has programs that benefit school-age and youth, such as the park districts and the YWCA programs.

Stacie received her bachelor's degree in family services from Eastern Illinois University. "I always knew I wanted to work with youth in a school setting, but not in a formal teaching role." The position with the Tazewell County Health Department after-school program became available in August 2002. Stacie started as a program coordinator and moved into the administrator's position in December 2005.

One of the greatest challenges of Stacie's position is staff retention. "As we professionalize the field under Gateways to Opportunity, I hope it will help to reduce staff turnover. I know the Gateways professional development system will also help to increase the quality of care provided to children and youth, which is our ultimate goal."

Stacie is co-chair of the Illinois School-Age and Youth (**I-SAY**) Development Quality Assurance Committee. Stacie also services on the Board of Directors for the **Illinois AfterSchool Network** (IAN).

Lilian Katz: Reflections

Building a Foundation for Future Learning

For the past decade, many politicians and administrators have "pushed down" the primary curriculum to younger and younger children. As we at Gateways consider the professional development needs of both those who work with preschoolers and those who work with school-age children and youth, we have the opportunity to address this problematic trend. In these Reflections, I explain why a "bottom-up" approach to education can help us to think more deeply about the continuity of children's development and their long-term developmental needs.

Preschool curriculum choices are increasingly discussed in terms of alignment with the next grade—kindergarten and the primary school. Indeed, the concept of alignment is one of the main ideas in the new edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. A recent message in "Notes from the Executive Director of the Society for Research in Child Development" also referred to alignment, noting that the Foundation for Child Development was

promoting “the need to align the curriculum from Pre-K through third grade, which we know to be a critical transition point for educational engagement and achievement” (Sherrod, 2009, p. 11).

I want to suggest a different paradigm for thinking about the kinds of experiences we should try to provide to our preschool-age children. I would suggest that instead of doing earlier what we probably shouldn't do later, we should focus on building a good foundation upon which the rest of a child's education can be built.

I find a useful analogy for approaching the many challenges of education in the early years is to think of it as setting a good foundation for the future in much the same way that architects and structural engineers approach the work of building a structure. At the outset, three basic principles must be applied to the design of the building's foundation. (There is a fourth principle that I will add as well.)

Principle 1: Know the Child

The first principle is to base the design on comprehensive information concerning the nature of the soil the structure will be resting upon. The structure would have to be designed differently depending on whether the soil is rocky or muddy or sandy, etc. In a similar way, a teacher gathers as much information as possible about the kinds of experiences that each child in the group has or has not already had, and what each child has or has not already learned. A teacher uses this information in the processes of deciding which experiences to provide for them. In order to do this effectively, the teacher gives time and effort not only to knowing about each child, but also to knowing each child.

Principle 2: Be Clear about Long-Term Goals

The second principle of foundation design is to focus on the characteristics of the structure that is to be placed on top of the foundation. Thus information about the building's attributes—such its height, weight, area, horizontal expanse, and so forth—are carefully studied and taken into account during the design processes. Similarly, curriculum developers and teachers plan experiences for young children in terms of their broad aims and goals as well as their more immediate specific objectives.

As preschool educators, we will need to find out as much as we can about what will be ahead for our youngsters as they make their way through the primary school years. Thus a good foundation in the early years takes into account all domains of development: social, emotional (both of which must be off to a good start by about the age of 6), and cognitive, as well as intellectual, physical, aesthetic, cultural, and other fundamental aspects of growth, development, and learning. It is not simply limited to learning a few letters of the alphabet and to the mastery of a few discrete skills practiced on worksheets or practicing the calendar—which is a terrible waste of time! (It is important to distinguish between knowing something, like the days of the week, and understanding something, like what a week is!) Rather, the experiences we plan for the children are based on the role that these experiences can be expected to play as a foundation for future learning. The experiences we choose to give to children should be based on the best available knowledge of the relationships between early experience and mature functioning.

Principle 3: Anticipate Possible Future Stresses

The third basic principle of designing foundations is to anticipate all of the possible stresses to which the structure is likely to be subjected in the future. These might include hurricane-force winds, tornadoes, heavy loads of snow, floods, earthquakes, and the like. In a similar way, curriculum developers and teachers strive to lay foundations that can support long-term goals, such as the fundamental goal of all education—to develop and support a robust disposition to go on learning for a lifetime, rather than just to focus on short-term gains on annual tests that may be obtained at the expense of the disposition to go on learning.

Principle 4: Get It Right from the Start

Finally, a fourth principle is also what engineers and builders know, namely that if you do it wrong, it is very difficult and expensive to repair. In other words, educators should also keep in mind what builders know only too well: If the foundations of a building are not properly laid at the outset, it can be difficult and expensive to repair later on; indeed, some kinds of early errors may even be the cause of significant injuries in the future. Designers of buildings have extensive data from their experience and careful laboratory research on the effects of stress on foundations. However, one of the most intractable issues in the field of early education and child development is that the relationships between early experience and long-term stress management are difficult to pin down.

Conclusion

I have suggested elsewhere some of the kinds of experiences that children should have in the early years, but building a good foundation requires well-trained, well-qualified, and strongly supported staff. And as we all know, that requires at least decent pay and benefits and continuous inservice support. That is why what has been accomplished so far by the Gateways to Opportunity project is so important.

References

Copple, Carol, & Bredekamp, Sue. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Sherrod, Lonnie. (2009, January). Notes from the executive director of the Society for Research in Child Development. *SRCD Developments*, 52(1), 1, 11-12.

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.

The description on the home page of the [Gateways to Opportunity Web site](#) explains that “Gateways to Opportunity is the single statewide support network designed to provide guidance, encouragement, and recognition to individuals and programs who serve children, youth, and families.” Not long ago, the introduction on the home page described Gateways to Opportunity as an early care and education professional development network. How did the Gateways system evolve to include professionals who work with school-age and youth, and how has that change strengthened Gateways?

While discussions about developing credentials for school-age and youth (SAY) development practitioners in Illinois were taking place within the [Illinois Afterschool Network](#), the movement to connect the professional development needs of SAY to the professional development needs of those in early care and education (ECE) in Illinois gained momentum from a statewide meeting in October 2006. That meeting—the School-Age and Youth Credential Symposium—brought together representatives from all sectors of programs working with school-age children and youth, representing various program settings, geographies, and ages served. The symposium highlighted Ellen Gannet from the National Institute on Out-of-School Time and involved the National Child Care Information Center (NCCIC) and the Afterschool Investments Project, providing national information and expertise to inform the day. The

purpose was to convene stakeholders across the state to inform them about the professional development system building underway and to engage the field in the development of credentials and related supports for school-age and youth practitioners.

After the symposium, the Illinois School-Age and Youth (I-SAY) Development Credential Committee grew in numbers, determined its internal structure, and formed several committees that mirrored the Professional Development Advisory Council (PDAC). The I-SAY Committee began to work on core knowledge and continued to reach out to the broader field to ensure that the needs of the diverse field were being addressed. Susan Rohrbough, a consultant with **NCCIC**, provided technical assistance to the committee. In September 2007, the I-SAY Leadership Team participated in a discussion at the statewide meeting of PDAC about how I-SAY might fit within the existing Gateways to Opportunity structure. Those discussions continued through spring 2008. In June 2008, PDAC approved a recommendation to rename the “Core Credential” the “ECE Credential,” an important step in a transition to a broader scope for Gateways.

Workforce surveys, data from programs serving school-age and youth in Illinois, and national trends informed the discussion about the exact age span to be served by Gateways. A number of administrative and funding systems in the state talk about a continuum of services for children and youth. In some cases, service continuum models include birth to age 25. The decision was made to expand the Gateways system to include birth to age 21, the age span promoted by the **Forum for Youth Investments' Ready by 21** model, which works to align systems and services to ensure that all young people are ready by age 21 for college, work, and life. The Ready by 21 strategic planning framework is being used in Illinois and has been piloted in several Illinois communities.

Many efficiencies were realized by expanding the scope of the Gateways professional development system. Instead of creating two systems to operate side by side, sometimes serving the same program or practitioner, a single professional development system that shares global content areas, parallel work in developing credentials, combined efforts to expand higher education opportunities, and efforts to systematize professional development at the state level makes wise use of limited resources.

Some of us involved in Gateways to Opportunity have expertise in early care and education. Some have expertise in school-age and youth development. We share a commitment to positive outcomes for all children. Research about the impact of early investments in young children is well documented. **Research** also tells us that the effects of investments in children are cumulative and reinforcing. Investments made only during early childhood, for example, will be less productive than investments that continue through the adolescent years. By expanding our scope to include the professional development of those who work with and care for children birth to age 21, Gateways to Opportunity helps to insure that the impact of high-quality early childhood education experiences are sustained through adolescence and young adulthood.

This article was prepared with input from the Illinois School-Age and Youth (I-SAY) Credential Leadership Committee. For more information about the I-SAY Credential, go to www.ilgateways.com/isay_credential.aspx.

New Gateways Resources

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

Early Childhood and School-Age and Youth Development Initiatives

Afterschool Investments Project
nccic.acf.hhs.gov/afterschool

Leadership to Integrate the Learning Continuum (LINC)
www.leadershiplinc.ilstu.edu

National Infant & Toddler Child Care Initiative
nccic.acf.hhs.gov/itcc

Research Centers

Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP)
childcareandearlyed.clasp.org/mission_statement.html

University of Illinois Youth Development Research Project
www.youthdev.illinois.edu/tydepubs.htm

Research Reports

Building a Seamless Learning Continuum: The Role of Leadership in Bridging the Gaps between Early Childhood and K-12 Education Systems
www.leadershiplinc.ilstu.edu/downloads/FINAL_LINCreport_000.pdf

A Comparison of Youth-Driven and Adult-Driven Youth Programs: Balancing Inputs from Youth and Adults
www3.interscience.wiley.com/cgi-bin/fulltext/109798959/PDFSTART?CRETRY=1&SRETRY=0

An Early Childhood Program Matrix: Pulling the Pieces Together for Illinois
ecrp.uiuc.edu/v11n1/beneke.html

Family Child Care Network Impact Study
72.32.138.202/hrc/earlyed/family_child_care_network_i.aspx

Preparing Teachers of Young Children: Current State of Knowledge, and a Blueprint for the Future
www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/pdf/teacher_prep_summary.pdf

Quality Improvement in Early Childhood Teacher Education: Faculty Perspectives and Recommendations for the Future
ecrp.uiuc.edu/v11n1/hyson.html

Supporting a Diverse and Culturally Competent Workforce: Charting Progress for Babies in Child Care Research-Based Rationale
www.clasp.org/publications/cp_rationale5.htm

The State of Preschool 2008
nieer.org/yearbook

Young Hispanic Children: Boosting Opportunities for Learning
www.srcd.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=229&Itemid=524

Career Opportunities & Job Links

Illinois Salary & Staffing Survey of Licensed Child Care Facilities: FY2007
www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=38614