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## November Issue

By now, I'm sure you know that in July, Governor Blagojevich signed a law that makes Illinois the first state to make preschool available for all three and four-year-olds. The budget included an additional \$45 million for **Preschool For All**. This is expected to give 10,000 more three- and four-year-olds in its first year of implementation a chance to attend preschool.

**Preschool for All** (PFA) requires experienced teachers who hold bachelor's degrees and specialized training in early care and education. PFA can be offered in a variety of settings, including public and private schools, child care centers, and licensed family child care homes, private preschools, park districts, faith-based organizations, and other community-based agencies. It is our hope that **Gateways to Opportunity** will help support those professionals who wish to work in these settings.

This quarter's newsletter hopes to bring you more familiar with the PFA initiative and the resources that **Gateways to Opportunity** offers. We will be continuing our efforts over the coming months to make more PFA information available on our website. Please continue to come back.

Enjoy!

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## Preschool For All

Illinois took center stage nationally when funding for the historic Preschool for All (PFA) initiative was approved during the spring 2006 session of the General Assembly. Central to the PFA provisions is an expansion of the state's 20-year-old pre-kindergarten program to serve an additional 32,000 3- and 4-year-olds over the next three years.

Articles in this issue of *Inside Gateways* discuss a few aspects of implementing Preschool for All as they pertain to professional development:

- the availability of Type 04 certified teachers for PFA classrooms;
- information about taking and passing the Basic Skills test—a requirement for those seeking admission to an Illinois teacher education preparation program;
- Frequently Asked Questions about Professional Development: Type 04 (Early Childhood) Teacher Certification
- flexible alternatives to meet the student teaching requirement for students who are working practitioners;

- innovative programs offered by higher education institutions to help students overcome barriers that hinder college completion;
- resources available through Gateways to Opportunity that help practitioners pursue higher education and continue their career in early care and education; and
- information about PFA collaborations with family child care programs.

In a final article, Lilian Katz discusses how early childhood educators can help children achieve our state's standards and benchmarks by focusing on the kinds of experiences each child needs to have in the preschool years.

Additional information and resources related to PFA will be added to the Gateways Web site as PFA is implemented around the state.

## Will Illinois Have Enough Teachers for Preschool for All?

The Illinois Education Research Council (IERC) recently examined the supply of early childhood teachers in the state to see whether it was adequate to meet the demand for additional early childhood certified teachers in PFA classrooms. In its 2006 report *Pipelines and Pools: Meeting the Demand for Early Childhood Teachers in Illinois*, [<http://ierc.siue.edu/documents/Pipelines%20and%20Pools%202006-3%20-%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>] IERC researchers concluded that through a combination of new teacher certificants and the "reserve pool" of Type 04 certified teachers not currently working in Illinois public schools, the state is in a good position to meet the demand for additional early childhood teachers. At the same time, the IERC report acknowledged geographic differences in the need for and supply of early childhood teachers around the state. For example, population-dense regions such as Chicago do not have an adequate supply of Type 04 teachers.

In addition to the need to increase the supply of teacher applicants in some geographic regions of the state, there is also a need to increase the supply of minority and bilingual and bicultural teacher applicants throughout the state. The Gateways to Opportunity focus on encouraging and facilitating child care workers already in the field to obtain a Type 04 certificate offers some hope to meet this need. Colleges and universities around the state are employing several strategies to help those already in the field to overcome some of the barriers they face to earning a Type 04 certificate, including the Basic Skills test, traditional student teaching requirements, and the need for greater flexibility in higher education programs.

## Student Supports for the Basic Skills Test

Each person seeking admission to an Illinois teacher education preparation program must pass the Illinois Basic Skills test. The Basic Skills test consists of 125 multiple-choice questions in reading comprehension, language arts (grammar and writing), and mathematics, as well as a constructed-response writing assignment. Many universities and colleges offer specialized courses, workshops, study materials, and tutors to assist students preparing for the Basic Skills test. An overview of the Basic Skills test can be found on the Gateways Higher Education Links page at [http://www.ilgateways.com/highereducation/forms/Basic\\_Skills\\_Test\\_Information9-06.pdf](http://www.ilgateways.com/highereducation/forms/Basic_Skills_Test_Information9-06.pdf). Information on registration test dates and sites, test standards/objectives, and study guides for the Basic Skills test are available at <http://www.icts.nesinc.com>. The Illinois Community College Board has developed an interactive, Web-based preparation site at <http://www.basicsskillsprep.org>.

## Flexible Alternatives for Student Teaching

Legislation passed on May 3, 2006, will lower barriers to student teaching. SB 2202 [<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocTypeID=SB&DocNum=2202&GAID=8&SessionID=50&LegID=22618>], sponsored by Senator Miguel del Valle, will allow early childhood practitioners who are already working to continue to be paid while they receive credit for student teaching at their place of employment, provided that the student teaching experience meets the requirements of their teacher preparation program. SB 2202 will also allow students to complete the student teaching portion of their practical experience in any of the preschool (ages 3-5) or K-3 grades covered by the Type 04 early childhood education certificate.

## Innovative Approaches in Higher Education

The last issue of Inside Gateways highlighted two of the innovative approaches taken by colleges and universities around the state to help early care and education practitioners further their education—articulation agreements at Greenville College, and online coursework and online student teaching offered at Kendall College.

A new section on innovative practices in higher education has been added to the Gateways Web site. It includes a third story about National-Louis University's subsequent certification program [<http://ilgateways.com/highereducation/educationinnovations.aspx#nlu>] and course adaptations for clusters of students employed in a particular location.

If you have stories to share about innovative practices at your college or university, please send them to Peggy Patten [mpatten@uiuc.edu].

## Resources Available through Gateways to Opportunity

The following resources and support are available through Gateways to Opportunity to help practitioners pursue higher education and advance their careers in early care and education:

- **Professional Development Advisors** [<http://ilgateways.com/profdevel/profdevadvisors.aspx>] — trained mentors and coaches who help individuals achieve professional development goals in addition to finding funding resources, courses and trainings for credentials and degrees, and assistance in creating professional development plans;
- **Financial Opportunities** [<http://ilgateways.com/funding/funding.aspx>] — information about scholarships, loans, wage supplements, and professional development funds available for individuals and programs;
- **Illinois Job Board** [<http://ilgateways.com/jobs/jobboard.aspx>] — a free search service for finding or posting an early childhood position; and
- **Higher Education Directory** [<http://ilgateways.com/highereducation/educationdirectory.aspx>]— an easily searchable database of early childhood degrees and certificate programs offered by two- and four-year higher education institutions in Illinois.

## Preschool for All and Family Child Care: Collaborative Partnerships

Through various kinds of collaborative partnerships, Preschool for All can be offered to children in licensed and license-exempt family child care homes. These partnerships benefit family child care programs, as well as the children and families they serve.

At least two models exist for utilizing PFA funds in family child care. One model involves an entity (a family child care network, a community-based organization, a school district) that applies for a PFA grant. To receive PFA funds, programs must employ early childhood Type 04 certified teachers [[http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/07\\_preschool\\_rfp.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/pdf/07_preschool_rfp.pdf)] who, by definition, must hold B.A. degrees. In this model, the PFA grant pays for a type 04 certified teacher to come to the family child care programs in the network to provide Preschool for All while the children remain in their familiar family child care setting.

In a second model, an entity applies for a PFA grant to provide preschool services at a location outside of the family child care home. Children leave the family child care program for a portion of the day—usually 2½ hours—to go to another community setting (e.g., a local public school, a community child care center, a park district building, a public library) for preschool services provided by PFA. In some models, the children attend an outside program all week. In other models, the children attend the outside preschool program four days a week, and on the fifth day, the PFA teacher visits the children in their family child care programs.

There are many benefits to these PFA and family child care collaborations. Children benefit from continuity of care in a comfortable and familiar program setting as well as the experience of being in a group with their peers (since in some cases a family child care home may have only one 3- to 5-year-old child). Parents benefit from access to a full-day, high-quality early childhood program that meets their family and work needs. Family child care professionals benefit from the opportunity to work with and learn from PFA teachers and to participate in joint professional development activities. Opportunities for co-teaching and mentorship are uncommon in family child care, a setting that can be isolating for adults.

An added benefit realized in the second model (where children receive PFA services in a separate community building) is reduced family child care group size for a portion of the day, which permits greater focus on the younger children remaining in the family child care home.

Perhaps most importantly, there is no financial disincentive for combining PFA and family child care services, since child care state reimbursement rates remain the same for children receiving PFA services. (Note: state reimbursement is the same whether the kids participate in either the visiting teacher or the outside program model.)

Some challenges remain to successful collaborations between PFA and family child care. Paying transportation costs and arranging for adequate supervision of young children during travel times are critical issues in those cases where children must be taken to a central PFA location. Successful partnerships depend on identifying collaborators with available space to dedicate to the program and on relationship building—both time-intensive endeavors.

## Organizations with Information about Collaborations between Preschool for All and Family Child Care

Ounce of Prevention <http://ounceofprevention.org>

Action for Children <http://actforchildren.org>

Illinois Early Childhood Collaboration <http://www.ilearlychildhoodcollab.org>

Early Learning Illinois <http://www.earlylearningillinois.org>

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## Lilian Katz: Reflections

### Standards of Experience

Around the country, early childhood educators are working hard to develop practices to help all children to achieve their states' standards and benchmarks. One way to think about meeting these goals is to identify what kinds of experiences each child should have to help meet those goals. The list below offers a way to start thinking along those lines...

It has probably always been the case that public officials, policy makers, politicians, journalists, and others outside the education community have employed a variety of clichés when discussing education. Clichés are usually defined as vague, stereotyped, overused expressions with which large numbers of people can readily agree. They also have a kind of common sense quality to them.

For example, the first goal on the list of national goals proclaimed by the National Education Goals Panel in 1990 is "All children shall come to school ready to learn." Was it assumed by the officials who originated this goal that children were not learning during the five years of life before entering school—learning, for example, how to walk and talk and play, and so much more? How should this sentence "All children shall come to school ready to learn" have been completed? Ready to learn what? Probably the sentence could have ended "...ready to learn whatever the school wants them to learn."

Today the answer to the latter question is most likely to be stated in terms of performance standards, benchmarks, and other types of outcomes. Early childhood educators are pressured to get children "ready" for school, ready to "succeed" in school, and ready to perform well on tests of academic skills. All of these goals and outcomes are frequently cited as the end-products or outcomes of the curricula delivered to young children. Frequent reference to the "delivery" of a curriculum, as in delivering the mail, and talk about "inputs" designed to produce specific "outputs" or outcomes is increasingly frequent. These concerns with outcomes and end-products are based on a corporate, industrial, or factory model of education. Indeed, some even refer to child care as an industry instead of as a service. Such an industrial model implies that once the raw materials have been placed on the right kind of assembly line and then been subjected to a fixed series of processes, "out" will "come" identical products—identical shoes, chairs, cell phones, or test scores, or whatever else is being manufactured. This industrial model is not completely successful for corporations and factories; periodically there are bankruptcies and large-scale recalls of manufactured products because of faulty design or errors in production processes. The industrial model is not fool-proof for industries, and I suggest that it is a highly inappropriate basis for thinking about the education of young children. In fact, it is most likely to be seriously misleading for the design of provisions for young children.

I am suggesting that a more appropriate approach might be to ask ourselves: What are the standards of experience that we want all of our children to have? Rather than "delivering" education, we are most likely to help children by "providing" experiences known to benefit young children. Thus when we decide to evaluate or assess a provision for

young children, we might ask: What kind of experiences is each child having much of the time? Or perhaps we should ask: What does it feel like to be a child in this environment day after day after day? To use these questions as a basis for assessing the appropriateness of provision for young children requires coming to agreement on what experiences are considered and known to be essential to yield the kinds of short-term and long-term effects (vs. products) we want to cause. Below is a very preliminary list of some important “experiences” that should be “standard” in all programs for young children.

Young children should frequently have the following experiences:

- Being intellectually engaged and absorbed. • Being intellectually challenged.
- Being engaged in extended interactions (e.g., conversations, discussions, exchanges of views, arguments, planning).
- Being involved in sustained investigations of aspects of their own environment worthy of their interest, knowledge, and understanding.
- Taking initiative in a range of activities and accepting responsibility for what is accomplished.
- Knowing the satisfaction that can come from overcoming obstacles and setbacks and solving problems.
- Having confidence in their own intellectual powers and their own questions.
- Helping others to find out things and to understand them better.
- Making suggestions to others and expressing appreciation of others’ efforts and accomplishments.
- Applying their developing basic literacy and numeracy skills in purposeful ways.
- Feeling that they belong to a group of their peers.
- Etc., etc. (Add your own ideas of important experiences here).

The list is derived from general consideration of the kinds of experiences that all children should have much of the time that they spend in our educational settings. It is based on solid philosophical and empirical evidence about young children’s learning and development.

If the focus of program evaluation and assessment is on “outcomes” such as those indicated by test scores, then children’s experiences of interest to evaluators and assessors would very likely be “drill and practice” of phonemics, or rhyming, or various kinds of counting, or introductory arithmetic. While in and of themselves such experiences are not necessarily harmful, they overlook the kinds of experiences that are most likely to strengthen and support young children’s intellectual dispositions and their innate thirst for better, fuller, and deeper understanding of their experiences. A curriculum or teaching method focused on academic goals overlooks the centrality of understanding as an educational goal. After all, literacy and numeracy skills are not ends in themselves but basic tools that can and should be applied in the quest for understanding. In other words, children should be helped to acquire academic skills in the service of their intellectual dispositions, and not at their expense.