

A Smart Choice: Early Education and Care

Eugene J. Monaco, Executive Director and Public Service Professor,
Professional Development Program

The call for evidence-based programming has been sounded across the education system in the U.S., and nowhere has it proven more imperative than in the early education and care sector. While policy makers, researchers, educators, and professionals in the field alike have spoken and written much about the importance as well as the benefits that derive from strong early education and care programs, results are now indicating that when these programs are supported by rich research, performance-based leadership, outcome-based workforce training, and strong advocacy groups, the pay-off can be even greater. Therefore, it becomes essential to place the continued professionalization and development of early education and care as a key priority on the agenda of policy makers at all levels, even in these times of scarce resources.

In the Power of SUNY Strategic Plan, Chancellor Nancy Zimpher gives support to building a “cradle to career” pipeline on the foundation of a cadre of highly effective teachers at all levels in the education system, starting with early education and care. You might ask why the chancellor of one of the largest public higher education systems in the U.S. is concerned with early education and care. It is because she, too, recognizes that from the very beginning of the education pipeline investments in quality early education and care have a significant impact not only for children but also communities, taxpayers, and inevitably on quality in higher education. Without this investment all will be shortchanged.

Findings from recent research are clearly reinforcing these premises. At the MIT Workplace Center and the Legal Momentum’s Family Initiative conference in 2005, the results of a series of statewide studies substantiated the economic benefits of investing in early education and provided evidence for building and maintaining a strong early education and care infrastructure. Reports from states were consistent in emphasizing the significant economic impact that a strong early education and care system produced in the communities studied. In New York State similar results have been substantiated. The New York State Child Care Coordinating Council in its report, Investing in New York: An Economic Analysis of the Early Care and Education Sector (2004), verified that such investment helps prepare young children to succeed in school and ultimately to become better citizens who will earn more, contribute more in taxes, and commit fewer crimes. The Council went on to document that the early care industry in New York State is a larger economic engine than are the hotel and lodging, air transportation, and public transportation industries combined. In fact, as an economic driver, it is almost as significant as the banking industry. Cornell University’s Linking Economic Development and Child Care Research Project completed a 50-state

Continued on page 6

Higher Education for Early Childhood Professionals
Did You Know?
News and Views
Supporting Early Child Care and Education Workforce
QUALITYstarsNY

Pg. 2
Pg. 2
Pg. 3
Pg. 4
Pg. 5

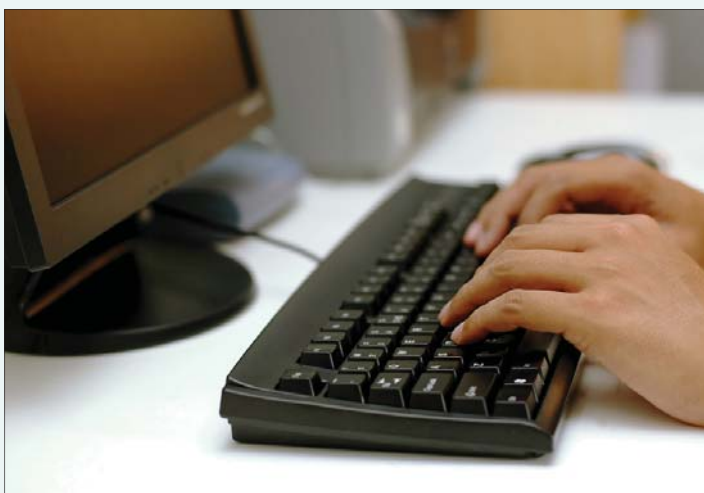
A Newsletter from the
**Professional
Development Program,
Rockefeller College**



**UNIVERSITY
AT ALBANY**
State University of New York



“Cradle to Career” is an initiative in the Power of SUNY Strategic Plan to provide highly effective teachers at all levels of the education system, starting with early education and care.



Higher Education for Early Childhood Professionals

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It is widely understood that the cognitive and social skills of elementary school children can be predicted by their early child care experiences. To ensure that child care programs implement developmentally appropriate practices, it is critically important that they are led by competent leaders who can promote best practices (National Association for the Education of Young Children Position Statement). Former Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley endorsed this concept in a speech delivered at the Early Childhood Summit on June 23, 2000. He said, "We simply have to elevate the child care profession and make sure that all of our teachers and caregivers are first rate professionals."

Historically, there have not been apparent and accessible career pathways for obtaining the knowledge and skills needed to successfully administer child care facilities and manage program quality. Administrators and leaders typically arise from within the field.

Based in part on this information, the Early Childhood Department at SUNY Cobleskill developed a B.S. degree program in Child Care and Development which was approved by the NYS Department of Education in 2003. The program focuses on children from birth through age 5 and has two options: Curriculum or Leadership. The Curriculum option is designed for students wishing to work as educators in a variety of settings; many students go on to graduate school to earn their master's degree with teacher certification.

The Leadership option was designed to provide professional development options for early childhood personnel and create a

knowledge-based career advancement path for individuals interested in roles such as: child care center administrator, director, manager, and superintendent. The main goals of the course work in the Leadership program are for students to become competent in leadership, financial management, staff training and development, program development, assessment and evaluation, and partnering with families and community. These are essential skill areas recognized by the National Child Care Association.

Through the influx of our graduates as well-educated, professionally-trained leaders and administrators into the field of early care and education, the SUNY Cobleskill Early Childhood Department hopes to fulfill its goal of ensuring both the success and stability of child care programs and the promotion of quality and best practices. Those interested in more information on the program are encouraged to visit the program web site at: <http://www.cobleskill.edu/academics/lasschool/child/childcarebs.asp>. **PDP**

For more information visit National Child Care Association at www.nccanet.org/index.cfm and the Conceptual Framework for EC Professional Development at www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSCONF98.PDF

Did You Know?

Dr. James Heckman, Nobel Laureate and professor of economics at the University of Chicago, estimates that every \$1 invested in high quality early childhood programs for at-risk children can result in an \$8.70 return for the individual and society.

— *Salt Lake Tribune*

The Early Education Industry in New York State:

- Includes 22,000 regulated child care/early education small businesses
- Employs 119,000 in regulated programs
- Serves 623,000 children
- Produces \$4.7 billion in gross revenue received by child care providers
- Serves 750,000 parents

— *Early Care & Learning Council:
Policy and Advocacy*
www.earlycareandlearning.org/policy/



News and Views

Cecilia Archer and Kyle Nurse Present at National Conference

Education Specialists Cecilia Archer and Kyle Nurse each presented at the 35th Annual National Eligibility Workers Association: Professionals Associated Through Human Services (NEW PATHS) National Conference at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Buffalo, August 22-25, 2010.

NEW PATHS is a national organization with members from all levels of the human services, case management, and eligibility determination professions from around the country. The association identifies and addresses information and training needs of its membership, and promotes excellence in the development, administration, and delivery of human service programs.

Cecilia delivered her two-part presentation, "How Enhancing Customer Service Can Unleash the Magic in Your Organization," twice during the conference. Kyle also delivered a two-part presentation, "Uncovering the 'Hidden Rules' of Economic Independence: Bridging the Gap between Poverty and Self-Sufficiency." Their presentations were delivered in interactive workshop formats and were well-received. Both presentations were based on curricula development and training work PDP provides to state, county, and service provider staff under contract with NYS OTDA. **PDP**



Cecilia Archer



Kyle Nurse

HWRI Grant Provides Continuing Education for Nurses

PDP, in partnership with the Office of Mental Health, Departmental of Correctional Services, and the Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, administers the HWRI RN to BSN/MSN Program. This program, funded by the NYS Departments of Health and Labor, allocates and distributes funds to registered nurses to help them offset the cost of getting a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing (BSN) or Master's Degrees in Nursing (MSN).

One of the primary goals of the Health Workforce Retraining Initiative (HWRI) RN to BSN/MSN Program is to help alleviate the shortage of nurses in state agencies by improving retention of current registered nurses. Since studies have shown that support for education is a key factor in affecting attraction and retention as well as job satisfaction, having access to funds to significantly offset

the cost of pursuing a BSN or MSN is a major benefit to nurses employed by New York State. This comment from Marie Neptune, a participant and registered nurse from Pilgrim Psychiatric Center who graduated from Stony Brook University with her BSN in April 2010, illustrates this.

"I just want to use this moment to express my sincere gratitude to you all for devoting your time to implement the HWRI Grant to help employees build and enhance their professional goals. There is no word to express my gratitude for this excellent opportunity that you have opened for many people such as me, with this program. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to attain my goal and thank you for being a part of this great accomplishment. My family and I unite our voices together to say thank you..." PDP

Middle State Report re: PDP

UAlbany's accreditation status was reaffirmed by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) on June 24, 2010.

The reaffirmation process is conducted every ten years, and includes: a comprehensive Self-Study which documents UAlbany's compliance with all 14 MSCHE Standards of Accreditation; a review of the Self-Study and a site visit by an external review team; and a formal report by the external review team to the Middle States Commission.

The review team and the subsequent report highlighted the outstanding continuing professional education work done by PDP and made the following points regarding the scope of its programs:

- This is a well established program, with traditions in the school and in international reputation, representing an exemplar for this kind of endeavor to the entire nation. Once more, here is an example of one of the areas where UAlbany shines, with its strong connections of service in the State of New York.
- The program has explored different modes of delivery and is successful in servicing the working adults with greater flexibility and convenience. The program also provides a variety of different instructional activities to an ever wider spectrum of professionals in the public sector. This large portfolio makes PDP exemplary in keeping pace with the advances and changes in the job market.
- PDP represents also an example of success for self-sustaining endeavors in the University and should be considered and exemplary case.
- The PDP programs have all be identified as quality learning initiatives by all stakeholders.
- Careful assessment is done in all programs and data are used as feedback to enhance the existing programs and help create new ones. This is a good example of "closing the loop."

Suggestions

- The PDP should move forward as an exemplary model for the University as it deals with harsh economical times and finds its way of becoming more entrepreneurial and independent from government funding.

Continued on page 5



Collaborating to Support Early Child Care and Education Workforce

**Deborah McGuire, Director
Professional Development Program**

**Colleen O'Grady, Manager
Department of Early Childhood Training
Professional Development Program**

Today's knowledge about early childhood development and learning has been expanded through years of research and application. Now more than ever before there is public awareness and recognition that the early years provide significant opportunities to enhance and influence later learning. Neuroscientists, sociologists, and early childhood education proponents across the country have identified key periods of development in children. There is evidence that high-quality infant care results in enhanced cognitive and language development (Burchinal et al., 2000). Preschool has been identified as a critical period in a child's cognitive development, and is highly predictive of future academic success.

It is our collective responsibility to seize these developmental opportunities to prepare children to succeed in school, and later on in their careers. President Obama has made a commitment to provide the support that young children need for success, and has urged states to impose high standards across all publicly-funded early learning settings, develop new programs to improve opportunities and outcomes, engage parents in their child's early learning and development, and improve the early childhood education workforce.

State University of New York Chancellor Nancy Zimpher also recognizes the importance of high-quality educational experiences beginning at birth, and has called for a "Cradle to Career" engagement as part of the Power of SUNY Strategic Plan. With nearly 800,000 New York children under the age of six in need of child care while their parents are at work or school, policymakers

are rightfully focused on assessing and improving the quality of child care and early childhood education programs to support school readiness and maximize cognitive, emotional, and social growth in children. Critical to this effort is the professional development and training of early care and education providers.

Since 1992, the Research Foundation of SUNY has partnered with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to provide programming designed to meet the education and training needs of child care providers across New York State. In the beginning, the Early Childhood Education and Training Program (ECETP) was designed to assist providers in meeting minimum training requirements necessary to maintain their child care licenses and registrations. Over the past several years, the Professional Development Program has actively worked with OCFS to align this program with the QUALITYstarsNY initiative, which utilizes staff educational qualifications as one measure of child care program quality.

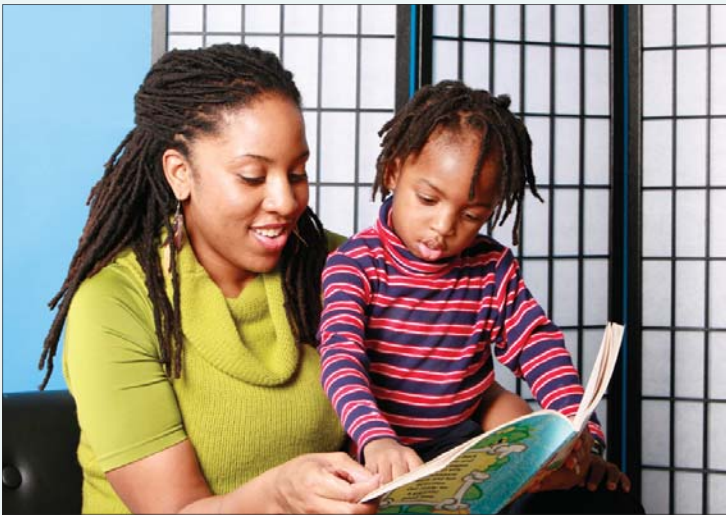
As an element of the ECETP, the Professional Development Program administers the Educational Incentive Program (EIP). Program rules associated with this large scholarship program have been modified to encourage early care and education providers to select college credit and child care credential activities over non-college credit courses and workshops. The percentage of EIP recipients taking college credit courses has increased by 12% since 2007, and the percentage engaged in credentialing activities has risen by 8% during the same period.

"Whoever touches the life of the child touches the most sensitive point of a whole which has roots in the most distant past and climbs toward the infinite future."

— *Maria Montessori*

SUNY's Strategic Plan has particular focus on developing highly effective teachers at all levels and has set a goal to ensure that all of the children of New York State have access to great teachers. Showcased on the ECETP web site are four SUNY Early Childhood Education programs that have received National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation. Cayuga Community College, Onondaga Community College, Schenectady Community College, and the State University at Cobleskill have achieved this highly regarded status. The program at Onondaga Community College is unique in that it can be completed online from anywhere across New York State.

PDP recognizes the important role that early care and education providers play in child development and the establishment of a foundation for lifelong learning. Organizationally, we continually seek new opportunities to work collaboratively with OCFS, SUNY, and other state agencies and organizations to support development of an early care and education workforce that is equipped with the theoretical and practical knowledge necessary to provide high-quality care for New York's children. **PDP**



QUALITYstarsNY

**Janice M. Molnar, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner
NYS Office of Children and Family Services**

Nationally, Quality Improvement Rating Systems have emerged in most states as a mechanism to assess the quality of child care programs and to systematically support quality improvement. In New York State, work to design the QUALITYstarsNY (QSNY) program began in 2005. Standard frameworks have been established for both center-based and family child care programs and are available at www.qualitystarsny.org. Under the QSNY 5-star/100-point rating system, programs will earn points in four categories: Learning Environment; Family Engagement; Staff Qualifications and Experience; and Leadership and Management.

A field test of QSNY was launched in January, 2010. Two hundred and forty child care programs from thirteen communities across New York State were selected to participate. The NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (PDI) is coordinating this effort, with the broad-based statewide support and guidance of the Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council. Field test programs have submitted their self-assessments and sites are currently being observed by independent assessors. When this process is complete, Quality Improvement Planning Consultants will provide technical assistance and assist programs in creating Quality Improvement Plans based on issues and opportunities identified in the assessments.

Once informed by data and feedback from the field test and the ongoing work of many dedicated individuals throughout the state, a statewide QSNY implementation plan will move forward. When fully implemented, QSNY star ratings will offer families valuable and easily understood information about the quality of the child care programs they may be considering for their young children.

America's long-term economic success depends on ensuring that children succeed in school and in life. Nurturing and stimulating early care and education programs help children become active learners and productive citizens. QUALITYstarsNY is a missing piece required to build a successful continuum of "cradle to career" initiatives in New York State. **PDP**

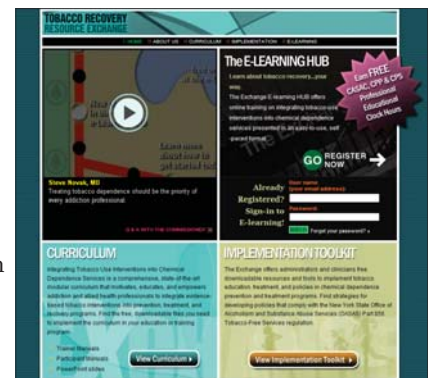
News and Views, continued

Middle State Report re: PDP, continued

- In its online offerings, PDP utilizes the LMS Angel, which will eventually be changed to Blackboard. PDP should discuss with those involved in the Blackboard administration in order to find a way to extend the Bb licenses used by the school in order to support PDP online programs as well. **PDP**

PDP Receives Distance Learning Award

PDP received a bronze award in the category of Best Practice in Distance Learning Programming from the United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA). PDP received the award for a suite of online modules created for the Tobacco



TobaccoRecovery.org

Interventions Project, a two-year project aimed at training chemical dependence service programs to implement tobacco-free environment policies and to provide tobacco dependence education and treatment interventions. The USDLA Awards were created to acknowledge major accomplishments in distance learning and to highlight those distance learning instructors, programs, and professionals who have achieved and demonstrated extraordinary results through the use of online, video-conferencing, satellite, and blended learning delivery technologies. Deborah McGuire and Ed Perka were invited to present "Blended Learning Affects Culture Change in Substance Abuse Treatment" at the USDLA Conference in St. Louis in May. The presentation was designed to showcase the Tobacco Interventions Project.

To find out more about the program or explore the online modules, visit the program's web site: TobaccoRecovery.org. **PDP**

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In an effort to support the University at Albany's mission to "go green," the *Communiqué* is now available via email. Individuals who would prefer to receive this publication in an electronic format can email: newsletter@pdp.albany.edu.

A Smart Choice: Early Education and Care

Continued from page 1

study that provides valuable qualitative and quantitative data that further validates the economic linkages of child care with economic vitality and provides further evidence that investments in quality early education and care are profitable – directly for children and parents and indirectly for communities, businesses, and taxpayers.

The early education and care field is at a crossroad driven by opposing circumstances: it has become a nucleus for economic development in many communities, while at the same time the early education and care field is under increasing pressure to deliver higher quality programs with measurable outcomes through a better trained and more professional workforce. Throughout the country, the growing recognition of the economic impact and return on investment that is derived from the child care industry, as well as the critical role it plays in the social infrastructure that supports children’s development while facilitating parents’ employment, must be captured and built upon to influence legislation, policy, school, and social program funding.

The challenge is to raise the quality of early education, which squarely rests on those policy makers and professionals in the field. They must wisely invest scarce resources in programs that promote quality improvement, showing measurable outcomes and evidence of their worth. Momentum has been steadily increasing to build more vibrant, professional, and credentialed early education and care systems. An example that stands out in making progress in this direction is the Quality Rating Improvement System

(QRIS), first introduced in Oklahoma in 1999 as a vehicle for improving quality across the full continuum of early education and care programming. The QRIS, which creates a uniform set of standards and a graduated level of quality linked to a corresponding set of “star ratings,” not unlike those established for hotels and restaurants, has taken hold nationally. Presently, 19 states and the District of Columbia now operate a statewide QRIS, and at least 27 other states are planning or piloting one. QRIS is a policy innovation that is rapidly sweeping the country. New York State’s version of QRIS—QUALITYstarsNY is a quality rating, improvement, and recognition system built on the QRIS principles. It is designed to recognize programs that demonstrate quality above and beyond meeting New York’s strong regulatory standards.

With such concrete results, now is the time to raise the consciousness level and gain the backing of the public to realize the value derived from supporting early education and care for the next generation. Failure to do so will result in a much steeper cost to local communities and society over time.

There still remains much to be done to move early education and care forward. The momentum in the field has been building, but it has yet to be proven that it will be sustained over time. The stakes for children, parents, and communities are too high to have failure as an option. **PDP**

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