



# The Early Childhood Workforce in Oak Park and River Forest: Increasing Program Quality and Promoting Professional Achievement

**November 18, 2015**



## Who is Involved

- Professional Development Coordinator (Collaboration Employee)
- Oak Park and River Forest Early Childhood Professionals
  - Center based programs (39)
  - Family Child Care programs (35)
  - Representing an estimated 425 people
- Professional Development Committee (volunteers)
  - ECE professionals in and out of the community
    - Directors
    - Teachers/assistants
    - Leaders of ECE professional organizations



## What research tells us - Why focus on Professional Development

- Teacher levels of educational attainment and training are closely associated with high quality programs.
- Teacher education is also associated with the responsive and innovative teaching that greatly benefits children and better prepares them for kindergarten entry.
- Highly trained early childhood professionals who are committed to professional growth are associated with providing high-quality early learning environments and programs.



# Needs of Oak Park River Forest Early Childhood Workforce

- Poorly compensated; limited resources to pay for professional development and continuing education.
- Work in isolated settings with limited to no access to professional development opportunities.
- Schedules are dedicated to caring for children, hours are long and rarely include time for planning, individually or as a team.
- Support in decoding the state's Early Childhood System.



What is the state's ECE system that the Collaboration works to align with?

ISBE

GOEC

IDHS

ELC

PDAC

IDCFS

QRIS

INCCRRA

GATEWAYS

CCRRs

PDA

Great START

CONFUSING !

These agencies and programs have been around for years but not connected or working together...along comes

**Federal Race to the Top**



# Early Childhood System in Illinois

## Early Childhood in Illinois

**ISBE**  
Illinois State Board  
Of Education

**GOEC**  
Governor's office  
of Early Childhood

**IDHS**  
Illinois Department of  
Human Services



**ELC**  
Early Learning Council

**PDAC**  
Professional Development  
Advisory Council

**IDCFS**  
Illinois Department of Children  
and Family Services



**INCCRRA**

Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies  
A statewide organization which – in partnership with its 16 local Child Care Resources and Referral (CCR&R)



### ExceleRate Illinois

<http://www.excelerateillinois.com/>  
<http://www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com/>  
Quality rating and improvement system  
for licensed child care, Preschool for All/  
Prevention Initiative and, Head Start/  
Early Head Start programs.  
QRS for Family Child Care



### Illinois Gateways

<http://www.ilgateways.com/en/>  
A statewide professional development  
system designed to provide guidance,  
Encouragement, and recognition to  
Individuals & programs serving children,  
youth, and families.

**PDA  
Credentials  
Registry**

**Great START  
Scholarships**



### CCR Agencies

<http://www.ilgateways.com/en/>  
INCCRRA provides professional development,  
technical assistance and training opportunities  
through Community Partners. Illinois Action for  
Children is Oak Park and River Forests CCR&R.



# We Align our work to the early childhood state system

- Provide training programs in best practice which are linked to state systems and requirements
  - The Collaboration is an “Approved Entity” with Gateways, the early learning accreditation agency for the Illinois early childhood workforce. *All* trainings offered are registry approved and align with state Professional Development Framework
- Coach ECE programs on quality improvement and engagement in ExceleRate Illinois
- Connect ECE professionals to state support systems
  - ExceleRate support specialists
  - Great START (wage enhancement)
  - Gateways Scholarships
  - Infant/toddler Specialists



# ExceleRate Illinois

- Encourage early learning providers to participate in ExceleRate. The state's continuous quality rating improvement system.
  - Represents 4 plus levels along the lines of Olympic medals.
  - Involves extensive requirements across 4 domains
    - Teaching and Learning
    - Family and Community Engagement
    - Leadership and Management
    - Qualifications & Continuing Education
- We provide coaching on quality improvement and how to effectively engage in ExceleRate.
- All of our trainings align with the professional requirements staff need to enable their sites to advance along the continuum of quality criteria.
- Connect ECE professionals to state support systems
  - ExceleRate support specialists
  - Great START (wage enhancement)
  - Gateways Scholarships
  - Infant/toddler Specialists





# ExceleRate Illinois

<http://www.excelebrateillinois.com/>





# Ensure Providers are accessing State Supports and Resources

- Connect Early Childhood Educational professionals to state support systems
  - ExceleRate support specialists provide baseline scores and identify areas for improvement before a final score is established .
  - Great START (wage enhancement)
  - Gateways Scholarships
  - Infant/toddler Specialists provide consultation to programs on curriculum, environment, teacher child interactions.





## Cont. The work we do

- Career development advising to early childhood staff in all types of programs around
  - Credentials
  - Degrees and Certificates
  - Professional Development; quality trainings (Gateways Registry Approved)
- Offer an annual symposium
  - 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium “Turning Obstacles into Opportunities: Navigating the Tough Stuff”, February 27, 2016. This has become a regional event attended by 350 -400 people each year.
- Provide leadership coaching to center directors and Family Child Care Providers (round tables)



	Fiscal year 2014-2015	Fiscal year 2015-2016
Numbers of trainings aimed at connecting with state systems	11 trainings for the year	10 trainings (only 5 months into the year)
Developmental screening trainings	7 trainings	7 trainings
Roundtables (Family Child Care & Center Directors)	6 meetings	2 meetings
Unduplicated count of participants	155	107
Centers represented	18	19
Family Child Care programs represented	20	23





# Struggles & Challenges

- Specific classroom and program challenges
  - Appropriate curriculum/environment
  - Guidance and behavior issues
  - Getting to know and trust state programs & systems
- Schedules
  - Staff
  - Course work (availability as well)
- New systems, lack of understanding about opportunities
  - Fear
  - Credential – degrees – certificates
  - ExceleRate



# System outcome work





# People who work with our children





# People who work in children's environments







# People who work in schools with young children





# People who work with the parents of young children





Thank you for your time and most importantly thank you for your commitment to the teachers of our youngest most vulnerable citizens.

“Anyone who does anything to help a child in his life is a hero to me”

Mr. Rogers