

EARLY CHILDHOOD ACCESS CONSORTIUM FOR EQUITY

Consortium Meeting
Agenda
February 26, 2024
1:00 pm
Via Zoom

A meeting of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity was called to order at 1:00 pm via Zoom on February 26, 2024.

The following institutions and their representatives were present:

Institution	Voting Member	Institution	Voting Member
Black Hawk College	Amy Maxeiner	Malcom X College	Absent
Blackburn College	Cindy Rice	McHenry County College	Dawn Katz
Chicago State University	Inna Dolzhenko	Moraine Valley Community College	Absent
College of DuPage	Jean Zaar	Morton College	Michael Rose
College of Lake County	Diane Schael	National Louis University	Lisa Downey
Danville Area Community College	Penny McConnell	Northeastern Illinois University	Tom Phillion
DePaul University	Marie Donovan	Northern Illinois University	Laurie Elish-Piper
Eastern Illinois University	Laretta Henderson	Oakton Community College	Paula Luszc
Elgin Community College	Peggy Heinrich	Olive Harvey College	Absent
Governors State University	Shannon Dermer	Olivet Nazarene University	Lance Kilpatrick
Greenville University	Laura Schaub	Parkland College	Absent

Harold Washington College	Theresa Carlton	Prairie State College	Absent
Harper College	Kathleen Nikolai	Rend Lake College	Kim Wilkerson
Heartland College	Johnna Darragh-Ernst	Richard Daley College	Patricia Aumann
Highland Community College	Melissa Johnson	Richland College	Megan Broderick
Illinois Central College	Michelle Weghorst	Rock Valley College	Takeisha Lambert (delegate)
Illinois Eastern Community College	Robert Conn	Rockford University	Kimberlee Wagner
Illinois State University	Linda Ruhe Marsh	Roosevelt University	Jin-ah Kim
Illinois Valley Community College	Tammy Landgraf	Sauk Valley Community College	Jon Mandrell
John A. Logan College	Stephanie Hartford	South Suburban College	Anna Helwig
John Wood Community College	April Darringer	Southern Illinois University Carbondale	Stacy Thompson
Joliet Junior College	Melissa Szymczak	Southern Illinois University Edwardsville	Natasha Flowers
Judson University	Absent	Southwestern Illinois College	Carolyn Beal
Kankakee Community College	Sarah Gowler (delegate)	Spoon River College	Robert Kensinger
Kaskaskia College	Traci Masau	St. Augustine College	Shekeita Webb
Kennedy King College	Absent	Triton College	Susan Campos
Kishwaukee College	Judson Curry	Truman College	Kate Connor
Lake Land College	Tanille Ulm	University of Illinois Chicago	Kathryn Bouchard Chval
Lewis & Clark Community College	Randy Gallaher	University of Illinois Urbana Champaign	Anne Pradzinski

Lewis University	Rebecca Pruitt	Waubonsee Community College	Lisa Machtemes (delegate)
Lincoln Land Community College	Kalith Smith	Western Illinois University	Lindsay Meeker

Conveners: Others present include the following from the convening agencies:

Illinois Board of Higher Education: Ginger Ostro, Christi Chadwick, Jennifer Hernandez, Marsha Hawley, Vicki Phillips, Toni Potenza, Yinna Zhang, Emily Chase

Illinois Community College Board: Brian Durham, Marcus Brown, Adrienne Pickett, Amanda Lemanski, Nyssa Westermeyer

Illinois Department of Human Services: Zach Allen

I. Welcome, Housekeeping, and Opening Remarks
While participants were logging into the Zoom meeting platform, a slide asked participants to add a response to the following question: "Please share something interesting or exciting happening in your program." The answers gleaned from the chat box can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.
II. Minutes: Review and Approve
The minutes of the October 27, 2023, meeting were unanimously approved without corrections. Kate Connor moved to approve, and Johnna Darragh-Ernst seconded.
III. Opening Remarks Cont'd.
<p>Marcus Brown from ICCB provided an overview of the data found in the mid-year report published January 2024, containing leading indicators of progress including the following data points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Illinois institutions are actively engaging and recruiting EC workforce members and employers with more than 1700 outreach events in the AY23 which involved more than 26,000 workforce members and more than 6000 employers were involved in some way. •The navigators have been very productive assisting current or potential scholarship recipients with over 79,000 emails for outreach or technical assistance; 7,720 phone calls; 1,209 information sessions; 1,092 meetings with employers for outreach; 4,9249 meetings for technical assistance and 802 meetings with colleges and universities. These numbers are growing every day! <p>He then shifted to look at the next annual report targeted to be released late Spring, 2024, which will focus on: Enrollment, persistence, and completion of incumbent workforce; Outreach and participation of the early childhood workforce and employers; Keeping student loans out of the funding as much as possible; Responsiveness of needs of employer and workforce; Consortium budget; and Institutions' work to support students. The work may also be able to pursue goals that were set out three years ago including data sorting and data matching which is not a simple process but hoping to include it in the future reports.</p>

Brown shared that on July 1, 2024, legislation was introduced to establish a new Illinois Department of Early Childhood to help the public have one place to go to rather than multiple agencies. The Transition Advisory Council was formed including representatives of families, providers, and others to help form this new Department.

Additionally, Brown shared that changes to the ECACE Act that have been proposed include: ECACE Advisory to provide guidance on Consortium operations with the GOECD appointees now to be appointed by IDHS until the new Department of Early Childhood can pick this up. Also, it proposes to go from four meetings per year to two meetings per year and from two reports per year to one report per year. The proposal removes language from the legislation regarding regional hubs. It also adds ECACE Scholarship to the statute.

IV. Consortium Work: FY25 and Beyond

Brian Durham discussed the Governor's Proposed ECACE Budget for FY25, which included \$5,000,000 for the ECACE Scholarship proposing the use of state funds rather than the federal funds used. He discussed next steps in the budget process for Illinois and highlighted the following specific items:

- Higher Education Operating Budgets: 2% (\$30.6M) increase to public universities and community colleges.
- Other Scholarships: Maintenance of Minority Teachers of Illinois, Golden Apple and Gateways Scholarships
- Smart Start: \$75M increase in ECBG (e.g., Preschool for All and other programs to address preschool deserts by increasing 5,000 seats, which will mean additional teachers needed)
- \$200M in funding for Early Childhood Workforce Compensation Contracts

Durham provided an opportunity for Questions from the participants and the following questions were asked:

Q: Lyndsey Meeker: Question about the \$5M for scholarship. Is it just for student scholarship or other things?

A: Durham: Student scholarships are only use of the \$5M.

Q: Will navigators be involved in the new EC Agency under their funding?

A: Durham: Not sure, but a good question to ask in the future.

Q: In the chat: Who will get the new scholarship monies?

A: Brown: prioritizing renewals with revised guidelines.

Christi Chadwick of IBHE shared the Consortium next steps. She encouraged all to step back and look at the original vision which was developed by working groups that developed the idea of the Consortium to help institutions and partners to work together. The original vision was and still is: "Collectively and individually address opportunities and barriers for the early childhood workforce to access, persist, and complete credentials and degrees." The purpose of the Consortium was to work together as a collective group to streamline, coordinate, and improve accessibility and completion of degree pathways, while advancing equity using:

- Systems responsive to EC workforce needs
- Accessible programs, pathways, and supports
- Transfer without credit loss

- Coursework at multiple institutions without the hassle of navigating both systems
- Recognizing competencies – knowledge, skills, and abilities of the incumbent workforce
- Flexible and personalized paths to completion and credit for prior learning
- Access coursework when and where it is needed—not limited by geography, time, and format.

Brown led an activity using Padlet where the question, “What can your institution continue to provide beyond this year?” was asked. A variety of answers including course flexibility; student support; transforming the system that supports the workforce; persistence; completion; supporting better salaries/wages for workforce; how to better partner with employers at large; etc.

V. Working Group: Creative Course Delivery

Chadwick shared that IBHE is launching a working group for 2- and 4-year institutions to think about how we might work together after June 30 to provide support and accessibility to Consortium programs. Meetings will kick off on March 15 with meetings every two to three weeks for about 90 minutes (about 1 and a half hours) on Fridays and virtually, with time to be determined. It is open to two- and four-year institutions and those from various roles including faculty and administration. The working group members should be selected by the institution team. ECACE will send out an email/survey for those interested in participating. Time was provided for questions and no questions were posed.

VI. Communications: Building the EC Workforce

Zach Allen from the Illinois Department from Human Services Division of Early Childhood and Rebecca Livengood from INCCRRA provided an overview of a soon to be released Communications Campaign to promote career opportunities in ECE. Meeting participants reviewed live versions of advertising used in various formats and locations.

VII. Public Comment

Maya Portillo, Senior ECE Policy Advisor at Advance Illinois, commented on the work of the ECACE Consortium. Below is a transcript of her comments:

I want to start by thanking the agencies, higher education institutions and all other stakeholders here today for their exceptional leadership in standing up ECACE. In a timespan of just 2 short years - your commitment to increasing both access and completion to higher education degrees and credential programs for the early childhood workforce has been extraordinary and your work has not gone unnoticed.

In the recently released mid-year report, it was noted that 3,900 students and counting, representing 95% of Illinois counties have benefitted from the scholarship – that's remarkable!

And – not only have programs prioritized access and enrollment, but mentors and others within institutions have prioritized persistence and completion – which is key for our working students.

Indeed, beyond scholarships, we recognize the many other necessary components of this program that to date has made ECACE so successful including the support of the consortium higher education institutions, the mentors, the navigators, and so many others.

I am here today as an advocate for ECACE and to express Advance Illinois' deep concern over the recently released governor's budget proposal. We see this as a missed opportunity to build on the momentum that has been created here, and a serious one at that. We recognize the real impact ECACE

is having on the lives of the candidates served by the program and on future early childhood programs, centers, classrooms, and children and families.

The Governor and the state have laid out ambitious early childhood plans – plans we applaud. But we cannot effectively advance the State’s Smart Start Illinois plan to achieve universal PreK by 2027 without ongoing and sustained investment in our early educator pipeline and workforce. The one rests on the other – making ECACE essential.

So, this legislative session, we will be asking the General Assembly to sustain funding for this program – and do so at a level that maintains support for current scholarships and infrastructure as it looks to expand its impact – ideally the full \$60M required to run the program at the scale and with the depth required.

Once again, thank you for the immense work that has gone into making this program so undeniably successful. We will continue to advocate to ensure this program has the opportunity to continue to be so successful and make a real impact on the lives of the EC workforce, children and families of Illinois.

Thank you so much for your time.

VIII. Upcoming Meetings

The following meetings were flagged as upcoming:

- April 29, 2024: Virtual Consortium Meeting
- June 26, 2024: In-person Consortium Meeting
- June 27, 2024: In-person ECACE Event

It was noted that the June in-person meeting will have a quick turnaround time for travel reimbursement due to the end of the fiscal year being June 30.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:32pm.

Appendix I

Answers to the question, “Please share something interesting or exciting happening in your program.” gleaned from the Zoom Chat box:

12:58:50 From Kalith Smith to Hosts and panelists:

Kalith Smith, we are building an outdoor classroom.

12:59:31 From Kate Connor to Hosts and panelists:

Kate Connor, City Colleges, we are rewriting the whole program - from course descriptions and pre-reqs to assessments.

12:59:35 From Christi Chadwick to Hosts and panelists:

Christi Chadwick - the Consortium meeting is today! :)

12:59:36 From Kathleen Nikolai to Hosts and panelists:

Kathy Nikolai from Harper College, we’re piloting a bilingual ECE cohort

12:59:38 From Cindy Rice to Hosts and panelists:

Cindy Rice, we held our student teaching meeting last night and are eagerly looking forward to graduation! Fifteen new Bachelor degree Early Childhood teachers!

12:59:44 From Michael Rose to Hosts and panelists:

Michael Rose, we’re providing classroom kits to students.

13:00:26 From Michelle Weghorst to Hosts and panelists:

Allison Schweickert-Smith with ICC. We are about to begin dispersing literacy bags and informational packets to childcare centers in our district.

13:00:26 From Shannon Dermer to Hosts and panelists:

Shannon Dermer at Governors State University. We have resource boxes that we are giving to all of our incumbent students that will help them with their courses and their first year teaching. We are handing those out soon

13:00:27 From Amy Maxeiner to Hosts and panelists:

Amy Maxeiner, Black Hawk College. We are working to figure out continued supports for students once the grant ends.

13:00:53 From Laurie Elish-Piper to Hosts and panelists:

Laurie Elish-Piper, NIU, meaningful collaborations across our ECE and Child Development program areas.

13:00:56 From Johnna Darragh-Ernst to Hosts and panelists:

Johnna Darragh Ernst - Heartland CC - excited to be offering performance-based assessments connected to individualized pathways at Levels 3 and 4 in addition to Mursion at level 2

13:01:09 From Kim Wilkerson to Hosts and panelists:

Kim Wilkerson- Rend Lake College-We are working with students and our ECE sites on supplies, which they love. We also continue to see an increase in enrollment.

13:01:31 From Tanille Ulm to Hosts and panelists:

Tanille Ulm - We are purchasing Creative Curriculum Kits for our college students to teach to our childcare lab students at Laker Louie Junior Academy. Continuing support with tuition and gas reimbursements. Enrollment is still increasing.

13:01:33 From April Darringer to Hosts and panelists:

April Darringer, John Wood CC, we are going to have the most ECE graduates that we have had in many years.

13:01:38 From Robert Kensinger to Hosts and panelists:

Robert Kensinger from Spoon River College. We are in the process of building a children's library for our students to use.

13:02:08 From Rebecca Pruitt to Hosts and panelists:

Rebecca Pruitt, Lewis, we are piloting a new onsite mentoring model and we are also excited about all of the potential debt relief coming to recent former students.

13:02:38 From Sarah Gowler, KCC to Hosts and panelists:

Sarah Gowler, Kankakee Community College

We have outgrown our current classroom and working to collaborate across divisions to improve a large classroom. The space is currently outdated and drab. We are looking to make it collaborative /modular teaching space.

13:02:57 From Tammy Landgraf to Hosts and panelists:

Tammy Landgraf, Illinois Valley Community College is continuing to build student units for students and revising curriculum/assessments. We also built an ECE Lab.

13:03:06 From Jean Zaar to Hosts and panelists:

Jean Zaar, College of DuPage, we are very excited about the success of our apprenticeship pilot and hoping to expand!

13:03:46 From Anna Helwig to Hosts and panelists:

Anna Helwig-South Suburban College; We just completed the update of our dedicated classroom for Early Childhood.

13:03:59 From Melissa Johnson to Hosts and panelists:

Melissa Johnson, Highland Community College. We have worked on completely renovated our ECE classroom, and we looked forward to hosting an Open House and ribbon cutting for different times: one for our institution during the day and one for our community partners and students.

13:04:00 From Inna Dolzhenko to Hosts and panelists:

Inna Dolzhenko from Chicago State University. We doubled the ECACE target enrollment and are getting responses from the potential debt relief candidates with outstanding balances.

13:04:12 From Judson Curry to Hosts and panelists:

Jud Curry, Kishwaukee College. We've developed two new courses (Observation and Assessment and The Exceptional Child) and have hosted a series of national and local early childhood speakers.

13:04:13 From Lindsay Meeker to Hosts and panelists:

Dr. Lindsay Meeker, WIU. We are excited to be partnering with some of the apprenticeship grants/initiatives. We are also working on creating job interest COPs.

13:04:23 From Diane Schael to Hosts and panelists:

Diane Schael College of Lake County-we are offering courses at the child care centers as developing active learning classrooms on campus

13:04:32 From Amy Chamley to Hosts and panelists:

Amy Chamley - Parkland College, we are renovating a classroom within our Child Development Center, so we can use the space for classes when the center is closed in the evening, and provide childcare for students.

13:04:55 From Cathy Main to Hosts and panelists:

At UIC we will have 20 students completing M.Ed with PEL in ECE and ecse graduating in May — all funded with ECACE!

13:05:19 From Carolyn Beal to Hosts and panelists:

Carolyn Beal Southwestern Illinois College Our apprenticeship program is also growing, community centers are requesting to participate, and we have had to limit enrollment.

13:06:20 From Melissa Johnson to Hosts and panelists:

Our mentor and I are going to Santa Fe next week for an ECE apprenticeship boot camp! :)

13:09:03 From Shannon Dermer to Hosts and panelists:

Shannon Dermer--Our other big project is we renovated some space in our library that will be an in-person and remote early childhood lab set up with books, activities, and furniture like a classroom. Our incumbent early childhood program will utilize it for demonstrations, workshops, activities. We have scheduled times in where it is only for our use during ECE class times and when we are not utilizing it children from the community can use the space.