

(<https://www.actforchildren.org/champion/join-movement/e-advocate>)

This Issue: Building a Sustainable Early Childhood Workforce



When it comes to growing a sustainable early childhood workforce, the field faces several challenges - some of which, such as inadequate compensation levels, can seem too daunting to even know where to start. These issues are complex, and solutions require coordination across systems. The good news is these discussions are happening in Illinois and across the country, and there is growing momentum to lift up the early childhood profession and the practitioners educating our youngest learners. Below, we've laid out some of the key challenges in the early childhood workforce, along with efforts underway that highlight progress in these areas and opportunities moving forward.

Enrollment in & Completion of ECE Degree Programs



Illinois has seen a decrease in higher education enrollment across the board, but the drop off in early childhood education programs is concerning for a number of reasons. The drop off is in stark contrast to the growing emphasis on professionalization and increased expectations for teacher qualifications and program quality. Furthermore, this decline has broader implications for future higher education enrollment patterns, as we know quality early childhood education is correlated with educational attainment later in life. The data below comes from the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Illinois Early Childhood Degree Programs 2010-2016:

- Enrollment in ECE Bachelor degree programs decreased by 39% (2016 enrollment was 3,143)

- Completion of ECE Bachelor degree programs decreased by 19% (998 individuals completed programs in 2016)
- Completion of Pre-BA programs (associates, certificates, etc.) decreased by 20% (1,890 individuals completed programs in 2016)

Efforts to increase enrollment and completion of ECE degree programs:

- Chicago Early Learning Workforce Scholarship: In March 2018, the Mayor's Office announced a new scholarship program for new and existing City Colleges students in early childhood programs. The city's initial investment in the scholarship program is \$2 million. For more information about applying for a scholarship, click here. (<https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/sites/chicagoearlylearning/home/scholarships.html>)
- Gateways has partnered with dozens of high schools across the state to offer Gateways ECE Level 1 Credentials to high school students enrolled in dual-credit courses to encourage them to enroll in ECE degree programs after graduation.

Hiring Qualified Staff & Pathways for Existing Staff to Further Qualifications

Staff requirements vary by program type, position, and funding stream - which makes it difficult for some practitioners to transition into new positions (i.e. from an early childhood teacher assistant in a licensed child care to an early childhood teacher in a Preschool for All classroom) and challenging for employers to find candidates for open positions. A recent report from the Illinois Board of Higher Education found the following:



- Average turnover rate across programs was 37%
 - Average turnover rate for center-based preschool classrooms (42%) was double the rate for school-based preschool classrooms (21%)
- Over two-thirds of surveyed providers reported significant challenges hiring lead teachers:
 - Lead infant toddler teacher takes average of 13 weeks, while infant toddler teacher assistant takes 8 weeks
 - Lead preschool teacher takes average of 11 weeks, while preschool teacher assistant takes 9 weeks
- Specialized teachers are also challenging to find:
 - 42% of programs required bilingual teachers
 - 47% required special education teachers
 - Over half of these programs reported significant challenges hiring these specialized teachers

Efforts to help new and existing professionals meet qualifications and ease hiring challenges for programs:

- Senate Bill 1829 (Sen. Hutchinson - Rep. Gordon-Booth): SB 1829 addresses staffing challenges in community-based Preschool for All (PFA) programs by temporarily allowing alternative qualifications for teachers in PFA classrooms. For the next 5 school years, programs could hire applicants who hold one of the following qualifications for PFA classrooms:
 - Professional Educator License (PEL) with early childhood education endorsement (currently the only way to become PFA teacher)
 - Gateways Early Childhood Education Credential Level 5*
 - PEL with Stipulations with transitional bilingual educator endorsement and:
 - Passed an early childhood education content test; OR
 - Completed at least 9 semester hours of early childhood education coursework* *For the second and third options, these teachers are expected to be pursuing their PEL with early

childhood education endorsement, and it will be required to remain in their position after this legislation expires (in 5 years).

- Once SB 1829 passes, we need to ensure the correct pathways are in place for these teachers to get their PEL and early childhood endorsement in the 5 year timeline. For example, current student teaching requirements present serious challenges for current practitioners, who have to leave their job to work in a school setting without pay; but if community-based early childhood classrooms were approved student teaching settings, this would remove that obstacle and incentivize the practitioner to go for their PEL.

Capitol Corner: House Bill 4965 (Rep. Wallace - Sen. Hutchinson)



HB 4965 extends the eligibility period for families participating in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) from 6 months to 12 months and provides much-needed stability and predictability for children, parents, and providers. Furthermore, this is a federal requirement under the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) - and to help states implement all requirements under CCDBG, the federal government has provided additional funding that will cover more than the cost of implementing 12-month eligibility in Illinois. This legislation passed out of the House of Representatives with strong bipartisan support on April 20, 2018 (101-3-0), and it is now in the Senate.

Community Systems Events

Illinois Action for Children's Partner Plan Act Conference

The Annual Partner, Plan, Act Conference provides local collaborations, state systems leaders, and early childhood stakeholders opportunities to deepen their capacity for community systems development through engaging presentations and peer-to-peer exchanges.



- June 12 | 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. | Bloomington, IL

The conference plans are being finalized but registration is open now! (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A_go.actforchildren.org_e_471011_n-2DCheckin-2Daspx-2DEventID-2D2366969_3323m_32309402&d=DwMFaQ&c=euGZstcaTDIlvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=wIVQXSx1P2UD3GcwR1sjSFshtQkPnxhUtAKqMysCFY&m=GZ8k5vN7aS5nhHGD8mUfGW7-VZHH_4Ky69H30dM5Ik&s=-U-YCLSDoekEFHYqw2gD2FbHDrHcxqEGBxIB5I008ho&e=)

Engaging Families In Your Childhood Collaboration

Illinois Action for Children invites you to participate in a dynamic workshop where you can learn the latest proven strategies and tactics for actively involving families in your Collaboration. There is no cost to attend and there are four sessions to choose from:

- May 23 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. | Normal, IL
- May 24 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. | Normal, IL
- June 5 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. | Chicago Heights, IL
- June 26 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. | Arlington Heights, IL

Get the complete details and register (https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__go.actforchildren.org_e_471011_trainings-2Dand-2Devents-2D_3323k_32309402&d=DwMFaQ&c=euGZstcaTDIlvimEN8b7jXrwqOf-v5A_CdpgnVfiiMM&r=wIVQXSx1P2UD3GcwR1sjSFshtQkPnxhUtAKqMysCFY&m=GZ8k5vN7aS5nhHGD8mUfGW7-VZHH_4Ky69H30dM5Ik&s=TgXXgNLFH2_FsCsHMMZHOpIKqVhUCf2CbJTWNb4kQxl&e=) for one of these can't-miss workshops, today!
