

The AECC Presents

**EARLY LEARNING PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT SERIES:
SUPPORTING SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL
DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**



2014 IMPACT REPORT

Made possible with support from Illinois State Board of Education in partnership with



State Representative
La Shawn K. Ford

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The Austin Early Childhood Collaborative’s 2014 Early Learning Professional Development Series: Supporting Social and Emotional Learning was made possible with funding from the Illinois State Board of Education.

Summary

The Austin Early Childhood Collaborative's "Early Learning Professional Development Series: Supporting Social and Emotional Learning" offered eight workshops to childcare providers, focused on building participants' skills and knowledge related to fostering social-emotional development in young children. The workshops provided a total of more than 854.5 hours of professional development to 137 individual participants. Seven of the workshops were presented in English and one in Spanish. Participants consistently rated their learning experience highly, both on quantitative evaluation scales and on open-ended qualitative evaluation questions.

Background

In early 2013, Austin Coming Together created the Austin Early Childhood Collaborative (AECC) with the support of Early Childhood Action Partnerships, a project of Illinois Action for Children with funding from the State Advisory Council Grant, in cooperation with the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development. The purpose of the AECC is to create and sustain a seamless, accessible, and high quality system of support for young children and families in the Austin community of Chicago.

The AECC's first major project was the *2013 Austin Early Childhood Symposium*. During the event, the AECC and its members provided professional development for childcare providers and educators, showcased a panel discussion about the state of early childhood education in Austin, and presented awards to deserving parents, providers, and other leaders in the community. The Symposium not only celebrated the work of early educators and providers, it brought greater community awareness to their work and helped to develop their knowledge of social emotional development of young children.



Due to the overwhelmingly positive feedback from the approximately 120 attendees, the AECC decided to organize a follow-up Professional Development series for Austin's childcare providers. In late 2013, Austin Childcare Providers Network secured a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to ensure the 2014 professional development series could be fully funded.

Project Partners and Roles

Austin Childcare Providers Network (ACPN)

The goal of the Austin Childcare Providers' Network is to equip women to become effective and community-driven childcare providers. Since 1998, the ACPN members have educated over 15,000 children in the Austin community and throughout Chicagoland. ACPN acted as the lead agency for the Austin Early Childhood Collaborative's "Early Learning Professional Development Series: Supporting Social and Emotional Learning." ACPN managed the ISBE grant funds, directed the planning and implementation of the professional development series, and mobilized its vast network of childcare providers to attend the professional development workshops.

By the Hand Club for Kids

By the Hand Club serves over 120 children and youth from the Austin community. Recently, By the Hand built a state of the art youth center in the heart of Austin. The AECC was able to utilize By the Hand's quality Austin facility for the workshops, including its classrooms and auditorium.

Erikson Institute

Erikson Institute is the nation's premier graduate school in child development, working to improve the care and education of children age birth to eight. Erikson has been deeply involved in improving the quality of early education and care in the Austin community since 2010. Erikson's instructors and program were involved in the planning of workshops, as well as workshop instruction and facilitation.

University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education

UIC's College of Education strives to prepare the next generation of educators to establish equity in Chicago public schools. Faculty and students from UIC have been deeply committed to improving the quality of instruction in Austin over the past 5 years. Graduate students from the College of Education were involved in planning of workshops, as well as workshop instruction and facilitation.

University of Illinois Extension

University of Illinois Extension is the flagship outreach effort of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, offering educational programs to residents of all Illinois' 102 counties. Faculty member Dr. Durriyyah Kemp was involved in planning of workshops, as well as workshop instruction and facilitation.

Austin Coming Together (ACT)

ACT's mission is to increase the collective impact of its member organizations on education and economic development outcomes in the Austin community. ACT assisted in facilitating communication between all project partners, marketing the workshops, event coordination, and evaluation of the workshop series.

Need for Project

As one of Chicago's largest and most distressed community areas, Austin needs substantial investments to ensure children from birth to age eight have the necessary supports to learn and develop successfully. According to 2010 U.S. Census figures, there are approximately 13,000 children between the ages of 0 and 8 living in the Austin community. Almost half of these children live below the federal poverty level (Illinois Action for Children 2012 Chicago Community Area Fact Sheet). Further, approximately 1 in 4 children live in extreme poverty, or below 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (Chapin Hall, Early Childhood Care Programs Supply and Demand, 2013). These numbers suggest that thousands and thousands of young children grow up in Austin with a plethora of disadvantages that threaten their development into economically successful and healthy adults.

An emerging body of evidence suggests that *social and emotional skills* are critical to overcoming disadvantages associated with poverty. Furthermore, researchers have detected gaps in social and emotional development between young affluent children and their low-income peers as early as the age of three years.

What we know about Austin children appears to be consistent with this larger body of research. A 2012 Erikson Institute assessment of Austin's early childhood landscape found social and emotional issues to be one of the top three issues that challenge Austin children's readiness for learning.

Based on what we know about child development, and more specifically about children in Austin, we must ensure that our community has the capacity to support the social and emotional development of our youngest children. As a first step, the Austin Early Childhood Collaborative is embarking on an initiative to equip childcare providers of the Austin community with the knowledge and skills they need to support the young children they work with.

Goals and Objectives of Project

One of the primary purposes of the Austin Early Childhood Collaborative is to ensure that the system of supports for young children and their families in Austin is **high quality**. As an initial goal, the AECC wanted to assist providers increase their level in the Gateways to Opportunity Early Childhood Education Credential Framework, the credentialing system recognized by the State of Illinois for childcare providers.

The objective of Austin Early Childhood Collaborative's "Early Learning Professional Development Series: Supporting Social and Emotional Learning" was to provide 50 early childhood education and care providers in Austin with 2 points towards their Level 2 or Level 3 Gateways to Opportunity Early Childhood Education Credentials. Each point is the equivalent to 7.5 clock hours of registry-approved training. These

50 providers would in turn, improve the quality of care provided to an estimated 600 children under the age of 6.

Project Description

Eight professional development workshops were held at By the Hand Club, 415 N. Laramie, on four Saturdays: February 22, March 15, April 12, and May 17, 2014. Each workshop's duration was 3.75 clock hours. Each workshop was aligned with one of the seven Content Areas outlined by the Gateways to Opportunity credentialing system, as follows:

- Two workshops were aligned with the Human Growth and Development content area
- Four were aligned with the Interactions, Relationships, and Environment content area
- Two were aligned with the Observation and Assessment content area



Workshop Descriptions

Real Teaching with Real Colors: Exploring Diverse Teaching and Learning Styles

Facilitator: Dr. Durriyyah Kemp, University of Illinois Extension

Gateways Content Area: Observation and Assessment

Picture yourself having a unique level of communication, understanding, and insight into the things that motivate you as a teacher and/or provider and your students as learners. The power to accomplish this exists—you just have to unlock it! Explore how Real Colors® will complement the learning environment, assist in whole-child teaching and behavior modification, and enhance the social and emotional development of all young learners!

Watch Me Grow! A Developmental Approach to Conversations with Infants & Toddlers 0 – 3

*Facilitators: Colleen Whittingham and Emily Hoffman, University of Illinois at Chicago
Gateways Content Area: Interactions, Relationships, Environment*

Participants will be introduced to the basic components of social and emotional learning, with a focus on building relationships. We will then discuss the rapid development of children across this three-year continuum, and how providers' approaches to learning must adjust as quickly as children change. Through the use of video clip examples and vignettes, participants will discuss each scene and develop age-appropriate strategies that providers can use in facilitating the emotional security of children in their care.

Building a Strong Foundation

*Facilitator: Sara Anderson, Erikson Institute
Gateways Content Area: Interactions, Relationships, Environment*

This workshop will cover basic milestones of social-emotional development from birth to age 3 based on our knowledge of attachment. We will learn how young children's understanding of people around them grows and develops, and about the delicate balance between dependence on others and becoming their own little person. At each step, we will discuss the many ways caregivers can support and guide the child's growth through play, providing interactions with other children, age-appropriate discipline strategies, and helping the child learn to cope with separations, limits, and rules. The session will also talk about developmental "red flags." Training will be based on PowerPoint, video clips, and ample time for discussion.

Child Development and the Importance of Play (Spanish-language training)

*Facilitators: Sinane Goulet and Catalina Ariza, Erikson Institute
Gateways Content Area: Human Growth and Development*

This training will explain the five developmental domains, using games and puzzles to highlight the importance of play in promoting optimal child development. Emphasis will then focus on the social-emotional domain, highlighting key theories and concepts that affect social-emotional development in the first three years of life. Trainers will follow by explaining behaviors that may indicate concern and require further screening. Trainers will also detail administration of the Ages and Stages Social-Emotional/ASQ-SE Questionnaire and discuss referral procedures and community resources for further services.

Books Talk: Using Children's Literature to Talk about Relationships, Ages 3-5

*Facilitators: Colleen Whittingham and Emily Hoffman, University of Illinois at Chicago
Gateways Content Area: Interactions, Relationships, Environment*

Participants will be introduced to a number of developmentally appropriate children's storybooks to use in discussing trust, honesty, and conflict resolution. Throughout this interactive workshop participants will learn the value of teaching social and emotional learning in an explicit way, through the use of children's text. Everyone will take home a new book to add to their center's library. Participants will also be asked to bring a text from their center to the workshop to discuss application of the newly learned approach to a familiar book.

Nurturing Relationships and Preschoolers' Development

Facilitator: Dr. Christine Maxwell, Erikson Institute

Gateways Content Area: Interactions, Relationships, Environment

Trusting, responsive relationships are the starting place for early care and education that makes a positive difference. Let's dig in and explore new strategies for connecting with our children in ways that fuel their social, emotional, and intellectual learning. Helping children, especially those who challenge us most, build positive relationships with adults and other children is often not easy, but well worth every effort we make!

Developmental Red Flags: Early Detection of Delays, Ages and Stages Questionnaire, Referral

Facilitators: Sinane Goulet and Catalina Ariza, Erikson Institute

Gateways Content Area: Human Growth and Development

Trainers will define and discuss the benefits of detecting developmental delays early and making appropriate referrals; then explain how to administer the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, a standardized developmental screening tool. Trainers will follow by reviewing the Early Intervention System: referral process, evaluation procedures, and scope of services for children age birth to three followed by explanation of special education services for children aged 3 – 5. Attention will focus on assisting families in accessing services and advocating for their children.

Race, Culture, and SEL: Strategies and Lessons for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Facilitator: Dr. Durriyyah Kemp, University of Illinois Extension

Gateways Content Area: Observation and Assessment

Society today is more ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse than ever before. Educators play a critical role in preparing young learners for success. This interactive workshop will provide participants the opportunity to explore and engage in strategies, activities, and lessons that will allow them to expand their personal perceptions and the perceptions of their students—making learning meaningful and intentional for everyone.

Impact of Project

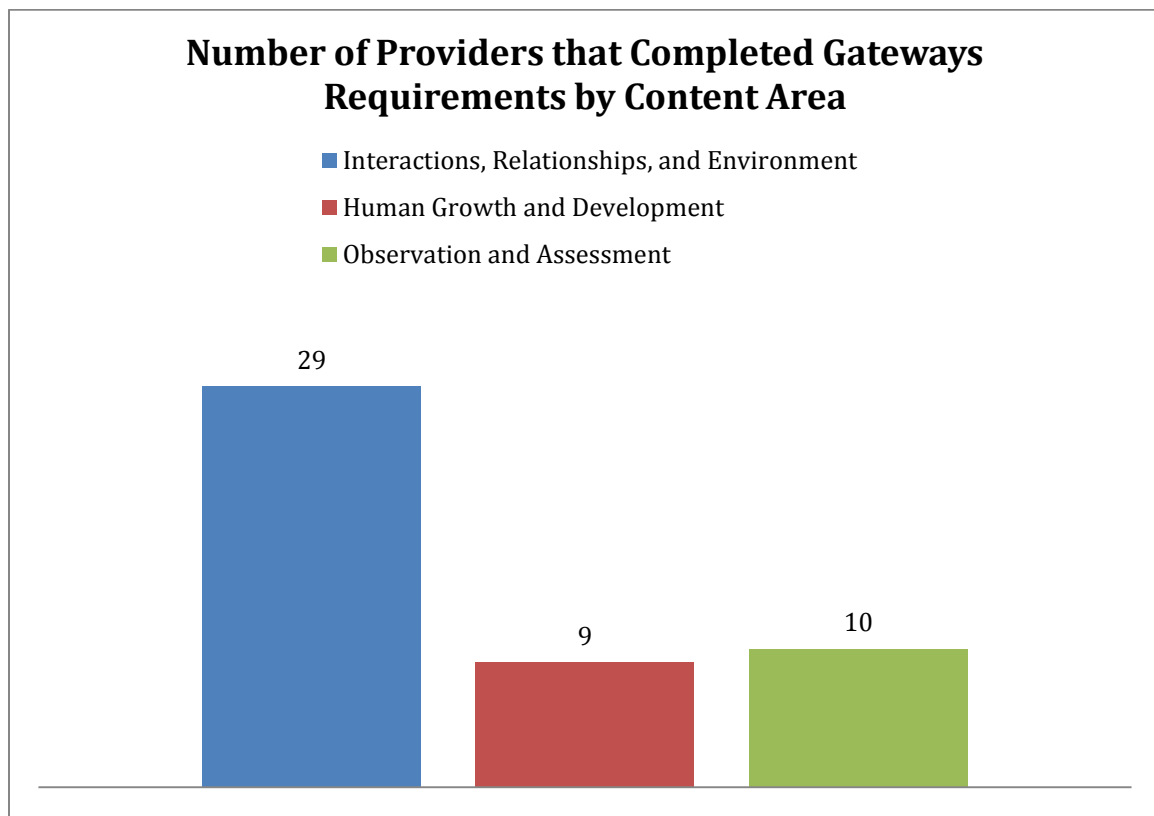
Scale of Impact

The *Early Learning Professional Development Series* successfully provided at least 3.75 hours of professional development to 137 childcare providers, potentially impacting the social-emotional development of over 1,600 children under the age of 6.

Progress Towards Project Objective

- 5 individual childcare providers completed the requirements for two Gateways to Opportunity content areas (7.5 hours of Professional Development each)
- 38 individual childcare providers completed the requirements of one Gateways to Opportunity content area.
- 94 individual childcare providers partially completed the requirements for a Gateways to Opportunity content area.

Achievement by Content Area



Lessons Learned

While the professional development workshops potentially impacted 1,600 children, and provided childcare providers with critical knowledge and skills, the AECC learned some valuable lessons that will help improve future professional development efforts. Lessons learned include:

- 1. The selection of workshops and their associated Gateways content areas need to be more intentionally aligned with Gateways credentialing requirements and the new ExceleRate Quality Standards.** In order for providers to move from Level 1 to Level 2 of the Gateways Framework, they must earn 3 points in Human Growth and Development, 3 points in Health Safety and Well-Being, and 6 points from ECE electives. Additionally, the ExceleRate Illinois Quality Standards for Childcare Centers require administrator and staff training relating to Transitions, Family and Community Engagement, and Inclusion of Children of Special Needs, among others. Priority should be placed on developing training curricula that meet these requirements, while also addressing the subject matter that providers need to better serve their children and families in Austin (social emotional learning, trauma-informed practice, early literacy, etc.).
- 2. Professional development resources can be used more effectively if we serve a cohort of committed providers with a series of trainings and additional technical support.** Participants for this professional development workshop series were recruited through existing networks and were allowed to register for workshops on a first come, first serve basis. While this recruitment method allowed the series to serve 137 providers, only 1 in 3 participants participated in more than one workshop. Moreover, none of the workshop participants received follow-up support (i.e. coaching or technical assistance) to ensure they could practice the knowledge and skills they acquired through their workshops. Working closely with a cohort of providers from centers and homes (that are fully committed to improving the quality of care) would help the effectiveness of future professional development, by channeling the investment of professional development resources towards individuals and organizations that will put it into practice.
- 3. The Collaborative needs a system that allows us to track and measure the impact of professional development on young children and their families.** If the Collaborative can direct professional development resources to a cohort of providers from committed centers and homes, we can begin to track the professional development progress of each individual provider, the quality progress of each childcare business, the outcomes of the children and families that they serve.

Next Steps

Based on the “Lessons Learned” section, Austin Coming Together recommends the following next steps—

- 1. Design a professional development curriculum for Austin childcare providers, involving critical members of the AECC’s Professional Development Committee.** The Professional Development Committee includes representatives from Erikson Institute, the McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership, University of Illinois at Chicago College of Education, and the Austin Childcare Providers’ Network. Each member brings critical expertise and resources to contribute to a comprehensive curriculum for Austin childcare providers. Additionally, Erikson and UIC have already conducted research to identify particular professional development needs of providers in Austin. This information can be used as a foundation for the curriculum along with the Gateways to Opportunity Framework, and the ExceleRate Illinois Quality Standards.
- 2. Encourage each member of the Professional Development Committee, and their affiliated institutions, to pursue and/or provide resources specifically for professional development in Austin.** Austin not only needs the technical expertise and experience of AECC members to inform the design of a professional development curriculum, it also needs the resources of their affiliated institutions to execute the workshops and coaching that comes with a curriculum. The Austin Childcare Providers’ Network (ACPN) has been conducting professional development in Austin for years. Their work and leadership has provided the basis for the AECC’s professional development initiatives. If we can influence leaders of other partner institutions to develop resources to work specifically with ACPN around teaching and coaching providers in Austin, this will greatly enhance their ability to provide the professional development that Austin providers need.
- 3. Reach out to childcare centers and homes of the Austin Childcare Providers Network in order to assemble a cohort of trainees for 2015.** While AECC members move closer towards a structured curriculum for Austin Childcare Providers, we must move forward with identifying the childcare centers and homes that are committed to quality. This will help the AECC begin to channel existing professional development resources to those providers and begin tracking the impact of professional development on providers and the children and families they serve.