



## Recommendation Summary for Building a Linguistically and Culturally Diverse IL Early Childhood (Birth-age 8) Workforce

These recommendations outline strategies for bringing equity and alignment to a siloed early childhood education (ECE) landscape in order to increase the quality of learning experiences for all young children, improve school readiness, and attract qualified teachers with fair compensation. The comprehensive nature of these recommendations requires partnership across state agencies (including IDHS, ISBE, IBHE, ICCB, and their advisory councils), institutions of higher education (IHE), community systems, and expert stakeholder groups. They build on shared elements across teacher preparation, funding streams, and program type, including credential development, course articulation, Gateways scholarships, data analytics, and compensation. Ultimately, these recommendations provide a roadmap for more comprehensive integration within the early learning workforce.

Projected student growth in Illinois from 2005-2020 will largely come from the children of immigrants<sup>1</sup>. Preliminary findings from the Illinois Early Childhood Workforce Hiring Survey (2017) highlight that the most difficult position to hire is a lead teacher licensed by ISBE. Forty-two percent of respondents indicated a need for bilingual staff with 15 percent needing more than two bilingual staff. More than half of respondents (55%) state there is a limited pool of bilingual early childhood candidates. Illinois cannot ensure school readiness and equitable services to multilingual children and families without diverse, well-prepared teachers.

To address this growing issue, the Latino Policy Forum and Ounce of Prevention convened a group of experts to draft the recommendations below. These approaches are intended to increase the number of non-licensed and licensed educators with the abilities to better support children in a variety of early learning settings. For further information, please contact Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro at the Latino Policy Forum [rvnavarro@latinopolicyforum.org](mailto:rvnavarro@latinopolicyforum.org) or Joyce Weiner at the Ounce [jweiner@ounceofprevention.org](mailto:jweiner@ounceofprevention.org).

### Recommendations to Increase the Number of ECE Licensed Educators with a Bilingual/ESL Endorsement

- 1. Issue Identification: An insufficient number of ECE teachers hold a Professional Educators License (PEL) and a Bilingual/ESL endorsement. Access to teacher licensure and endorsement programs must be expanded to attract candidates to meet the growing need for early childhood Bilingual/ESL teachers.**
  - **Recommendation:** Proceed with ISBE rulemaking to expand enacted ISBE Short Term Approval Rules (Section 25.430) to include IL Early Learning Council recommendations (8/28/17) allowing ECE Level 5 credentialed teachers and those who hold an Educator License with Stipulations endorsed for Transitional Bilingual Educator (Type 29) to teach in Preschool for All settings while pursuing a PEL with an Early Childhood Endorsement.
  - **Recommendation:** Expedite ISBE endorsement initiative by promulgating rules (Section 25 Education Licensure) that allow IHEs to create both alternative certification programs and subsequent endorsement pathways for teachers who already holding a PEL.
    - ✓ The Gateways early childhood credentials and their underlying competencies are based on a defined set of knowledge and skills reflected in NAEYC and ISBE standards.
    - ✓ The Gateways competencies provide a unifying frame for early childhood credentials and endorsements that are both portable between IHEs and stackable as candidates pursue additional education.
    - ✓ Gateways to Opportunity credentials are entitled by IDHS and offered at accredited IHEs in IL.

<sup>1</sup> Fry, R. (2008). *The Role of Schools in English Language Learner Achievement Gap*. Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center. Available at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/89.pdf>

**2. Issue Identification: Many potential teacher candidates face obstacles when pursuing teacher licensure. Barriers to licensure programs must be addressed to expand the number of candidates eligible to enroll in teacher preparation coursework leading to a PEL.**

- **Recommendation:** ISBE must broaden options for demonstrating proficiency at college level coursework and meeting entry requirements into teacher preparation programs, allowing more candidates to take coursework leading to a credential, degree, teaching license, and specialized endorsements.
  - ✓ The Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) is a significant barrier that eliminates many qualified and diverse candidates. Less than one-third of test-takers across candidate demographics pass all four sections of the TAP on the first attempt.
  - ✓ Current ISBE TAP alternatives include passing the SAT, or Act Plus Writing, and applicable content area test(s).

**Action Steps:**

- Waive the TAP if a candidate's GPA is 2.75 or above in college-level coursework earned at a regionally accredited institution; or
- Candidates have already earned a bachelor's degree with a 2.75 GPA from an accredited institution.

- **Recommendation:** Request that ISBE set a numeric goal for increasing the Bilingual/ESL endorsed ECE PEL statewide over the next five years, prior to the expiration of Section 25.430 Emergency Rules.

**Action Step:**

- ISBE should establish a data collection strategy for monitoring progress toward increasing the number of ECE PEL with Bilingual/ESL endorsements to ensure the field is on track for increasing the pool of teachers within the 5-year special approval timeline.

**Recommendations for Preparation of Non-Licensed ECE Assistant and Lead Teachers**

**3. Issue Identification: Associate and non-licensure BA Degree programs are not required to include ECE Bilingual/ESL pedagogy within their curricula.**

- **Recommendation:** The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB), Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), early childhood bilingual experts, and other stakeholders will design an Associate level Bilingual/ESL credential that articulates to a Bachelors level Bilingual/ESL endorsement to allow ECE teachers in non-Preschool for All settings access to linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy.
  - ✓ This process may require short-term financial support to develop, pilot, and implement this model.

**Action Steps:**

- The credential must meet the language and literacy development needs of very young learners who are simultaneously acquiring two or more languages which makes their language acquisition instructionally different from Bilingual/ESL endorsements which are typically tailored to older children who already have proficiency in their home language.
- The credential should be based on the two foundational courses required by ISBE towards the state's Bilingual/ESL endorsement including content in Cross-cultural Studies for Teaching Limited-English Proficient Students and ESL/Bilingual methods.
- Bilingual/ESL endorsement (BA level) and credential (AA level) content and the early childhood competencies that support them may be embedded in existing college level courses leading to degrees or Gateways ECE credentials.
- Coursework should align with ISBE Bilingual/ESL endorsement standards, IL Early Learning and Development Standards, WIDA Early English Language Development Standards and relevant IDHS and Gateways competencies pertaining to the understanding of the cognitive, linguistic, and developmental pathways of young dual language learners and emergent bilinguals.

- **Recommendation:** ISBE must expand its approval of IHE offered courses within degree and teacher licensure programs to more effectively support the language and literacy development of young dual language learners.

**Action Steps:**

- ISBE must entitle IHEs the ability to offer Bilingual/ESL courses containing pedagogy on developing language across an age/grade continuum of language acquisition.
- Already entitled Bilingual/ESL endorsement programs must be designed to include content on language and literacy development for children aged eight and under that incorporates best practices for emergent bilinguals.
- ISBE should permit non-licensed, BA degreed early childhood teachers to earn a Bilingual/ESL endorsement to ensure quality instructional practices are used in non-PFA funded early childhood settings.
- IBHE and IHEs should allow non-licensure track BA candidates to earn a Bilingual/ESL endorsement by making coursework available to all interested candidates.

- **Recommendation:** IBHE, ICCB, and ISBE should ensure that course frameworks approved by the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) Early Childhood Panel provide pedagogy, theory, and clinical experiences for strengthening multi-lingual and biliteracy development and culturally responsive practices.

- ✓ The Illinois Articulation Initiative is a statewide transfer agreement covering courses that are transferable among more than 100 participating colleges or universities in Illinois.

**4. Issue Identification: ECE course credits do not consistently transfer between 2-and 4-year degree and credential programs resulting in students being required to repeat some coursework.**

**Recommendation:** ISBE and IDHS will advance data sharing capacity between the Gateways Registry and the Educator Licensure Information System (ELIS) to store course credits, ensuring that students have a consistent, accurate record of completed courses taken throughout their academic careers to support course transfer.

**Action Steps:**

- All ECE degrees and credentials will be based on Gateways ECE competencies to promote comparable and transferable course content across 2 and 4-year IHEs.
- INCCRRA will work with IDHS and ISBE to align data bases and technology including developing shared protocol for entering course data that may articulate towards future credentials, degrees, licensure, or endorsements.
- ISBE will allow teacher candidates to (1) take the ISBE language assessment at any time and (2) provide proof of the State Seal of Biliteracy to ISBE using the foreign language passage score, saved in ELIS or the Gateways Registry, for later application towards a Bilingual/ESL Endorsement.
  - ✓ The Seal of Biliteracy requires that students demonstrate proficiency in both English and another language in the four domains of speaking, writing, listening and reading.

**5. Issue Identification: The lack of fiscal and academic supports is a barrier to designing diverse teacher preparation cohort models. (See Appendix A)**

- **Recommendation:** Public and private funds should be prioritized to encourage community providers, school districts, and IHEs to design cohort models leading to ECE and Bilingual/ESL degrees and endorsements. These programs must be designed to accommodate working adults.

**Action Steps:**

- IBHE, with relevant stakeholders, should provide guidance for developing geographically diverse cohort models with partnerships that include school districts/community-based providers and HEIs. These cohorts should provide access for ECE staff with bilingual skills to pursue Gateways to Opportunity ECE credentials and college degrees as well as the Bilingual/ESL endorsement or credential.

- Cohorts should be designed with multiple funding sources that school and community-based staff can access to support ECE credential and degree acquisition. Flexible spending options may include combined resources from sources such as Grow Your Own funds, school district’s professional development or Title funds, community-based organizations, philanthropic or private entities, the higher education partner, and/or the student.
- Resources may be used for a variety of supports, including tuition, books, or other supports such as tutoring as well as program expenses, such as hiring substitute teachers.

➤ **Recommendation:** ISBE should promote job-embedded coaching in school and community based programs to provide professional development that strengthens linguistically and culturally responsive instructional practices and collaboration between ECE assistant and lead teachers. Funding sources may include the Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG), City of Chicago, private philanthropic dollars, Grow Your Own, or federal Title funding.

### Recommendations for Early Childhood Teacher Compensation

#### **6. Issue Identification: A critical barrier to ECE teacher retention is low compensation, including limited benefits for assistant and lead teachers.**

**Recommendation:** ISBE, through the Request for Proposal (RFP) process should promote compensation parity and align salary ranges for licensed ECE teachers with local public school salary scales for positions requiring similar qualifications.

**Recommendation:** Early childhood advocates, IDHS and ISBE must work to identify mechanisms for increasing compensation for non-licensed EC teachers and teacher assistants.

**Recommendation:** Assistant and lead teachers who provide instruction in both English and another language should receive additional compensation for their bilingual skills.

## Appendix A

### CRITICAL INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD TO SUPPORT COHORT MODELS:

- Because of poor compensation in the early childhood field, a variety of financial supports, such as Gateways to Opportunity Scholarships and funded cohort models, are needed to increase the number of candidates able to complete coursework leading to degrees and credentials.
- ECE cohort models are successful when partnerships are fostered between school districts/community providers, and IHEs to jointly develop and implement programs.
- In addition to offering individual teacher scholarships, priority should be given to funding cohort partnerships that focus on supports needed for candidate completion. School districts and community-based providers require financial support for resources such as:
  - Book fees or lending libraries
  - Tuition costs
  - Access to on-line/in-person hybrid course models
  - Staff release time and substitute coverage
  - Daycare and meals on site for the families of staff who are pursuing higher education
  - Transportation to classes or on-site cohorts
- Effective cohort partnerships include focused academic counseling for teacher candidates with a consistent, designated contact person from the IHE and community organization:
  - To ensure knowledgeable, consistent, relationship-based collaboration with district/community providers
  - To assist with the careful selection of candidates
  - To provide academic tutoring and other supports for teaching requisites
- Institutions of higher education must be responsive to cohorts by providing:
  - Intensive advising
  - Access to other college/university services, such as writing and computer supports
  - Hybrid models consisting of face-to-face and online coursework
  - Condensed class schedules or class offerings at the work site,
  - Course offerings during evenings and weekends

## Appendix B

### Work Group Project:

The Latino Policy Forum and the Ounce of Prevention convened stakeholders, including advocates, funders, governmental agencies, higher education faculty, and community-based providers, for a finite time period (May-September, 2017). The group developed recommendations for increasing the number of qualified ECE educators prepared to serve linguistically and culturally diverse children. Key priorities of these meetings included the following:

- Reviewing successful state initiatives that increased the bilingual workforce, and
- Prioritizing views of ECE providers to aid in the creation of practical recommendations.

### Purpose:

The recommendations are intended to inform and support the Governor's Children Cabinet, Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, the Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and the City of Chicago. The presentations and discussions focused on three key issue areas:

- Determining the supply and demand of ECE licensed teachers with Bilingual/ESL endorsements
- Promoting competencies for successfully working with multilingual and multicultural children into AA and BA teacher preparation coursework and within the Illinois Gateways to Opportunities credentialing system. These linguistic and cultural competencies will be fully integrated within early childhood degrees and credentials at IHEs.
- Incentivizing the recruitment and retention of bilingual ECE teachers and staff, including support for further education with recognition that poor compensation is a leading barrier to growing the early childhood workforce.
  - Despite the increase in demand for early childhood teachers, ECE workforce wages have remained relatively stagnant over the last two decades.