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# Transfer Pathways Beyond Articulation: A Partnership Initiative Between National Louis University and Triton Community College

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## CHAPTER 5

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*Key Words:* barriers to program admission, basic skills assessment, community college/4-year partnerships, diversity, teacher licensure, test preparation, transfer

#### **Overview**

Teachers from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds serve as important role models for the children they teach, not only those who share similar experiences but also those from majority racial backgrounds, as models of competence and respect. Former Education Secretary Riley put it well when he said, “Our teachers should be excellent, and they should look like America” (Riley, 1998, title page). Moreover, teachers who embody diversity and practice culturally-responsive pedagogy can have positive effects on the academic success of their students because they understand what the students are experiencing in their lives (Riley, 1998). A dissimilar workforce at a school makes greater funds of knowledge available to the entire teaching staff, through collegial sharing and daily dialog (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto & Bode, 2008). The kinds of knowledge and insight teachers from varied backgrounds bring to children and their families makes these teachers especially valuable within diverse neighborhoods, such as those served by both National Louis University (NLU)

and Triton Community College. Recognizing the similarities and differences in student populations and embracing a shared passion for teacher preparation, the two schools were eager to work as partners to provide a pathway to Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) licensure for Triton students seeking to become Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers. (Note, all references to licensure refer to ISBE licensure.)

However, in September 2010, the Illinois State Board of Education set a new, higher cutoff score on the teacher entrance exam, the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP; Catalyst Chicago, 2014). As a result of the increase, another barrier to seeking an Illinois Professional Educator License with the early childhood endorsement was created, a change that caused many prospective candidates, especially minorities, to be unable to realize a qualifying score on the TAP. Test result data from the fourth quarter of 2013, for example, showed that only 18% of Blacks and 23% of Latinos passed the math portion of the test, compared to 40% of Whites. Meanwhile, only 26% of Blacks and 34% of Latinos met the reading comprehension requirements, compared to 52% of Whites. Overall, only 18% of Black and Latino test takers passed all four sections of the test, according to state records (Catalyst Chicago, 2014). The low scores are indicative of test unpreparedness and lead to the likelihood that an unknown number of potential ECE candidates never enter baccalaureate programs in education and perhaps never realize their dream of becoming licensed teachers in Illinois.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has waived the TAP requirement (composite score 240) for those candidates with composite scores of 22, and a writing score of 16, on the ACT-plus writing exam, or a composite score of 1110 on the SAT exam (ISBE Educator Licensure, 2016). These two alternatives provide some options for bypassing the TAP, but candidates still may face challenging testing hurdles, and they often do not enter 4-year programs in significant numbers. Anne Hallet, Director of Grow Your Own Teachers, a community-based teacher preparation initiative that seeks to diversify the teacher workforce, points to a number of factors impeding student success, including test anxiety, poor academic

preparation, English as Second Language backgrounds, and struggles with math (Catalyst Chicago, 2014).

In the wake of these trends and with the anticipated growth for early childhood educators projected at 7% between 2014 and 2024 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015), it was timely that an Illinois Board of Higher Education Preparation Program Innovation (EPPI) grant was awarded to National Louis University and Triton Community College. The EPPI grant afforded NLU and Triton a unique opportunity to explore issues surrounding transition to licensure programs in early childhood education and allowed for the examination of access and admission to licensure programs by the partners.

The grant focused on two areas: (1) test preparation and (2) the introduction of potential candidates to a 4-year university environment. The purpose of an introduction was to welcome students to the NLU college campus and expose them to a short sampler of innovative practices in teaching and learning that are part of the Bachelor in Arts in Early Childhood Education (BA ECE) experience. Since passing a high-stakes test of basic skills is a major barrier to program admission for many potential early childhood teachers, the NLU and Triton partners also sought to design supports for candidates that would help them score at the needed level on one of the required exams. An unintended but critical finding that came from this grant was the realization that partnerships and articulation agreements between 2- and 4-year institutions alone are not enough to support aspiring teacher candidates to become licensed early childhood practitioners. The results and conclusions described in this chapter will highlight the lessons learned.

## **Background and Significance of the Topic**

In the winter of 2013, NLU launched a redesign of its BA ECE program leading to the Illinois Professional Educator License. The redesigned program included an endorsement in English as Second Language/Bilingual for all licensure candidates, additional/extended fieldwork in pre-primary and primary age settings, and new coursework in emergent literacy.

Among the many updates to the NLU program was a plan to offer select early childhood classes at Triton College, in order to increase access to advanced professional coursework for those students wanting to complete a baccalaureate degree in early childhood education. In order to qualify for the Triton-based classes, students would have already taken required pre-requisite general education courses as outlined by the standing articulation agreement between the institutions, and would have passed the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP), or an equivalent state-recognized basic skills test.

Unfortunately, none of the prospective BA ECE teacher candidates at Triton achieved the necessary score on the exam. Thus in the fall of 2013, the NLU/Triton partners found there were not enough candidates to hold the ECE licensure coursework on the Triton campus. These disappointing results and the announcement of the EPPI grant revitalized the commitment between NLU and Triton and helped to re-focus plans to support early childhood teacher candidates seeking to obtain a professional educator license in the state of Illinois.

## **Initiatives**

Grant-funded activities were two-fold. One aspect focused on supporting prospective ECE candidates as they worked to pass the basic skills exam. To meet this goal, Triton and NLU faculty decided to provide interested candidates with extracurricular opportunities. Due to the constraint of a single year grant timeframe, it was decided that efforts would focus on preparing candidates to pass just one of the state approved basic skills tests, instead of all three. The ACT-Plus Writing exam was selected, based on the availability of specialized ACT test preparation materials.

The second aspect of the grant, creating a welcoming experience to orient community college students to a 4-year institution, provided Triton candidates with opportunities to become familiar with NLU, to sample some of the university's teaching practices and curriculum, and to interact with professors and support staff through two "ECE Innovation Workshops." These workshops were held on NLU's Chicago campus and were

designed to provide extra motivation for reaching the baccalaureate degree. Results of this program planning, the ACT support sessions, and the “ECE Innovation Workshops” are reported in this chapter.

## Literature Review

In response to recent scholarship on the need to improve teacher quality (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003) and the academic preparation of pre-service teachers, Illinois lawmakers passed legislation intended to increase the selectivity of colleges of education. The policy requires colleges of education to assess the academic preparation of applicants, and to admit only those who score highly on tests of academic proficiency (Illinois Administrative Code Title 23, 2014). This policy has been operationalized by requiring applicants to pass the Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) exam, or to achieve a score of at least 22 on the ACT-plus Writing test, and has had a significant negative impact on the diversity of candidates who are admitted to teacher preparation programs, especially early childhood education (ECE) programs (Chu, Martinez-Griego, & Cronin, 2010; Perona, LaSota, & Haeffle, 2015). While the state’s intent may appear well-intentioned, the exams function as gatekeepers with negative consequential validity (Messick, 1989), especially for the state’s linguistically and culturally diverse aspiring teachers (Perona et al., 2015).

However, it is not enough to simply provide preparation courses for increasing students’ test taking skills. For example, an issue that comes into play with courses designed to increase access to the university has been referred to as the “Matthew Effect.” This term refers to research findings (Stanovich, 1986) that show students requiring the most assistance in developing literacy practices are the least likely to be successful in skill-development courses, while those who require the least assistance are the most likely to be successful. It would appear that in order to increase access to ECE teacher preparation programs, more must be done than offering courses and workshops geared toward improving scores on standardized tests.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) finds that 63% of students at 2-year institutions take one or more remedial courses. This, in turn, slows down the time to graduation and adds to costs, resulting in fewer students graduating from associate degree programs than their 4-year counterparts (2012). In order to make the transition from community college to the university effective for ECE students, researchers demonstrated it is vital to provide support at the very beginning of academic programs (Sakai, Kipnis, Whitebook, and Schaack, 2014). Their research was conducted through interviews with 73 early childhood students pursuing ECE bachelor degrees. Most participants were students of color, and one third also spoke English as a second language. These researchers (Saki et al., 2014) concluded that financial assistance, as well as the scheduling and location of courses, was critically important throughout the program, although interestingly, students' use of tutoring, counseling, and technology support actually declined over time. A major implication of these findings is that it is important to heavily invest in academic supports at the beginning of students' postsecondary experiences, while financial assistance, course scheduling, and location of classes remain critical issues throughout ECE programs (Sakai et al., 2014).

Important components in accessing and succeeding in the transition from 2-year institutions to universities include the information students have about higher education in general, the academic expectations of universities, and the supports available to help students succeed. In a report of student success courses in Florida community colleges, researchers Zeidenberg, Jenkins, and Calcagno (2007) found that in addition to developing academic reading and writing practices, students benefited from explicit instruction on improving good study habits. They also found that students did not access university academic support services, because students were not aware of what was available on campus.

Moreover, addressing academic challenges is not enough, as noted in a research summary from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (Dukakis, Bellm, Seer, & Lee, 2007). This summary delineates obstacles ECE students face and identifies some of the supports universities can



provide to address these obstacles. Dukakis et al. (2007) identified lack of academic preparation as an obstacle but also stressed that it is only one factor. Additional complications may include work and family responsibilities, financial constraints, and the need of English language instruction for multilingual students. In examples of programs which sought to address academic unpreparedness, Dukakis et al. (2007) described five programs that effectively prepared ECE multilingual candidates through English language development courses. They also stressed the importance of providing “access-based” support, which includes offering courses at times that fit the work and life demands of ECE students.

Chu et al. (2010) also explored factors related to graduation of early childhood teaching candidates. These researchers recommended a culturally and linguistically focused approach to assisting ECE candidates toward degrees, based on what they learned from the candidates about their experiences in the program. Additionally, Chu et al. (2010) found that building relationships through collaboration and community had a positive effect on degree completion. Chu et al. (2010) moreover shared the following representative questions from ECE candidates who were asked to reflect on their engagement with academic experiences: “Do I feel comfortable here?” “Will my experience be respected?” as well as the following requests: “Make my courses relevant to my work with children,” and “Understand my family and work” (pp. 24-29).

Chu et al. (2010) likewise described one community college’s approach to addressing low graduation rates of ECE students. Said college created a team of ECE educators and college faculty to investigate barriers and to brainstorm solutions for candidates seeking an ECE associate degree. Strategies to support ECE candidates included focusing on creating and sustaining community collaborations, addressing barriers to degree attainment, and utilizing culturally relevant pedagogy that included vocabulary instruction and focused test preparation workshops.

Lastly, a central feature of the community college team’s strategy was to create a partnership between the community college and a local Head Start facility with the primary emphasis to develop a program that recognized

and valued the languages, cultures, and experiences of the ECE learning community. The community college/Head Start team achieved this in their ECE associate degree program by assigning bilingual faculty to courses and by actively including students' life experiences in the curriculum. The associate degree included a bridge program designed to introduce students to academic reading, writing, and math. New students who scored below the cut point for college level English skills were given the support of a college writing instructor and/or English as a Second Language writing instructor. (Chu et al., 2010).

### **Project Description**

The Pathways to Excellence in Early Childhood Education project (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.) involved a collaborative approach to its design and implementation. National Louis University, the 4-year partner, and Triton Community College, the 2-year partner, joined forces to plan the project, having had a decades-long relationship and a transfer articulation agreement already in place. Two ECE faculty members from Triton and four from NLU, representing the ECE and English as a Second Language/Bilingual (ESL/BIL) programs, made up the grant team. From a common interest in student success, faculty from both institutions formed a natural bond as the project planning got underway.

As part of this planning process, NLU and Triton faculty met two times per month over the year-long grant period to talk about the mutual issues facing early childhood teacher education and to brainstorm new and innovative approaches for bringing future candidates into the field. Immediately recognized was the need to address an obstacle many prospective early childhood candidates faced: passing a basic skills exam, the "admission ticket" into a licensure program and the teaching profession.

Further, the needs of the demographic represented by the ECE candidates was analyzed. It was found that most of the Triton students shared the following characteristics:

- currently working or observing at a Triton day care facility,
- low-income,
- students of color (Black or Hispanic),
- first generation college students,
- caregivers for younger siblings or older adults in the home (some),
- working in a day-care or early childhood setting, possibly as the sole wage earner in their family (some), and
- living with parents or adult caregivers.

In addition, more than 50% of the students spoke a home language other than English (Spanish, for all but one of these students). The partner institutions expressed their appreciation and respect for the challenging roles these students had to play, working, studying, and carrying many responsibilities at home. Therefore, the partners discussed at length how the grant design could be of the most value to these talented and versatile students, given their busy schedules, their limited financial resources, their linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds, and their relatively new exposure to the “culture” of college. What was needed was an intervention that would be practical, useful, motivating, and move the students toward success.

Because one aspect of the grant focused on test preparation, the Kaplan Test Preparation company (Kaplan, 2016) was enlisted to help guide project planners toward the goal of supporting candidates with the ACT plus Writing exam. Kaplan was selected because of its reputation for assisting students with test preparation; they were enlisted to work with the candidates in workshop settings at both the Triton and NLU campuses. Knowing the population of candidates and understanding the nature of their busy lives, several workshop schedules were created to accommodate

student's availability and study preferences including two 10-week Saturday sessions, as well as a more intensive three full day schedule. All workshops, including materials such as practice books, were provided free-of-charge to candidates.

During the same time period, a Kaplan consultant instructed NLU and Triton faculty in integrative test support for classroom teaching and stand-alone test preparation sessions. Faculty learned the "tried and tested" strategies and practices that are the foundation of the Kaplan curriculum, among them: full length practice tests with complete answer explanations, stress managements tips, and realistic practice for Math, English, Reading, and Science sections. Tips were given for applying these strategies in NLU and Triton classrooms as well, in order to support test preparation in strategic and meaningful ways.

The second aspect of the grant focused on "innovating" the transition from the 2- to 4-year college environment to mitigate students' fear of the unknown. Recognizing that 2-year candidates rarely left their community college settings, as reported by the Triton partners, "Innovation Workshops" were scheduled in which Triton students were brought by chartered bus to the NLU campus in Chicago, the 4-year institution. These day-long workshops were held in fall 2013 and winter 2014, with 55 participants total in attendance. The idea behind the workshops was to provide a "sneak preview" of university life, answer questions about adjusting to a 4-year college, and modeling sample techniques that are used in early childhood teaching.

To create an air of familiarity, a NLU university tour was conducted which included contact with faculty, advisors and financial aid staff, to guide students and help them see for themselves that it is possible to attain a 4-year college degree. As a highlight of the first visit, a guest speaker, an early childhood graduate who had matriculated at both NLU and Triton College, gave visitors a "pep talk." This talk proved highly motivating as reported on student exit slips, as the speaker herself was proof that attaining a degree and licensure was possible, or "Si se puede!"

To give candidates a taste of the fun and engaging 4-year early childhood curriculum offered at NLU, one workshop session modeled multicultural literature strategies supporting early literacy development. Another session demonstrated activities using multicultural music and movement in the classroom. Using music and movement activities with young children has been shown to increase phonological awareness, a prerequisite of literacy, for young learners (Paquette & Rieg, 2008) and for young English Language Learners in particular (Fisher, 2001). These techniques are part of the NLU signature practices in the BA Early Childhood-ESL/Bilingual dual endorsement program.

## Results

The NLU/Triton partners hoped that the ECE candidates would be willing to take advantage of this unique opportunity to learn more about test taking strategies. However, it was never expected that students would display the level of enthusiasm expressed during the two “Innovation Workshops.”

Although initially only one workshop was planned, the first was so successful that a decision was made to organize an additional one as part of the grant project. Since NLU’s ECE BA program had been recently revised to highlight the importance of early literacy as well as to include an ESL/BIL endorsement, the partners were thrilled to have additional Triton students experience the engaging signature teaching practices taught at NLU.

As part of these workshops, the future ECE candidates learned about two specific teaching strategies: implementing the use of multicultural songs to engage young learners, and a literacy strategy, the Three Tier Method for vocabulary development. The Three Tier Method focuses on the selection of key words for vocabulary instruction, which helps young students better understand content and develop richer vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008). The workshop on using multicultural songs included singing songs and learning related movement activities in both English and Spanish. Candidates had the opportunity to experience these described strategies, first-hand, and learn how to apply them in their own

future classrooms. Exit surveys filled out at the end of each workshop indicated that it was very exciting for the candidates to learn new tactics that they could use in building a repertoire of innovative and engaging teaching practices.

The interaction of candidates with the participating NLU faculty in the fun-filled workshops also demonstrated that faculty in 4-year institutions can be just as welcoming as those in 2-year institutions, a fact borne out in students' exit surveys. This was a critical aspect in helping students overcome any fears in moving beyond the 2-year campus setting and transitioning to a 4-year institution. As a highlight, both the NLU President and Provost conducted interactive read alouds with the students, using the inspirational book, *The Dot*, by Peter Reynolds (2003). When candidates adjourned for the day, their enthusiasm was high and their interest in early childhood licensure was heightened as further evidenced by exit surveys.

### **Survey Results: Student Voices**

At the conclusion of each day-long workshop, exit surveys were distributed to gain an understanding of what the students gained from the sessions and how they would apply what they learned in their future teaching. The exit survey, which was anonymous, was collected as students departed.

Below is a selection of questions and responses to the exit survey:

1. *As a result of today's workshop what new ideas and strategies will you use to support early literacy practices with toddlers and Pre-K students?*

(Responses are verbatim.)

- I think having reading time and words of the week would help them.
- I will pick out words based on the Tier 3 approach, study them, and figure out concrete and fun ways to teach them to the children.
- Introduce new words that are mature language with an easy comprehension for children.

- I think learning about the 3 tier words was the most helpful. I will definitely use that in the future as a teacher. (Anonymous, 2015)
2. *As a result of today's workshop what new ideas and strategies will you use to bring multicultural music to toddlers and Pre-K students?*
- Use different language songs, they are very effective for young children.
  - I think children can learn a lot from music so I think having music time and having sing a songs would be good.
  - Sing a song that is in Spanish and use body extensions to communicate the vocabulary.
  - I knew about Ella Jenkins, I did not know the other presenter. Music is universal, I will make an effort to use all kinds of music this week. (Anonymous, 2015)

Additionally, the grant team purchased five multicultural children's books for each participant as a gift and an incentive to begin building an early childhood library. Early childhood professionals have long recognized the critical importance of language and literacy in preparing children to succeed in school (National Institute for Early Education Research, 2006). Moreover, this research shows that early literacy experiences of children with books are linked with academic achievement, reduced grade retention, higher graduation rates, and enhanced productivity in adult life (2006). The Triton students left the workshops equipped with a mini-library of books and ideas to inspire future age appropriate literacy practices.

### **Results: ACT Test**

Anecdotal data regarding candidates' participation in the Kaplan preparation was collected on the first day of the Kaplan instruction and prior to learners taking the ACT plus Writing exam. Students were asked if they had previously taken the ACT, and if so, to share their score (if available), as well as to ask any other questions regarding test preparation, in general. This data showed that candidates' prior scores on the ACT fell below the

target score of 22. Additionally, several students had not had any experience taking the ACT.

None of the 35 candidates that attended the ACT-plus Writing workshop reached the necessary score of 22 on their ACT tests. However, there was still some cause for optimism. Scores moved in the right direction. Self-reported pre-test scores were between 15 and 18 for those who were retaking the test, whereas scores on the post-training exam ranged from 16-21 (with a perfect score being 36). The writing component was not scored on the pretest; therefore, no comparison of writing scores from pre to post training was available.

Anecdotal data showed candidates expressing test-taking anxiety with comments such as: “I am not a good test taker, I am nervous about taking this test,” and, in frustration, “How many times do I have to take this test?”

Many American community college students have not had the needed academic preparation at their secondary schools to enter college programs without further academic support, which only slows down their ability to complete a degree program (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Early academic support, throughout high school and community college, will prepare these learners for success in passing consequential tests of basic skills. With ongoing assistance, students will be ready to enter the university setting with enhanced preparedness and a readiness for the many tests that follow.

It should also be noted that attendance at the Saturday preparation sessions was not perfect, and coaches and faculty reported students’ commenting on the stresses of schedules and responsibilities, in addition to having negative feelings about taking high stakes tests. It could be inferred that these factors influenced candidate participation and test outcomes.

### **Lessons Learned and Modifications**

The NLU/Triton grant team learned that adding a test preparation workshop prior to taking the ACT, or a similar test of basic skills, is simply not enough to ensure success on the exam. Regardless of the delivery of



the test preparation, it is recommended that 2-year and 4-year institutions partner earlier to strategize and find ways to support candidates in passing these tests. This may mean that partners begin by mapping the curriculum documented in their articulation agreements and identifying specific classes in which to embed test taking strategies and skill development. If studying and test-taking strategies are practiced across many classes, it is more likely to become “second nature” by the time the high stakes tests must be taken. By spiraling content, acquiring skills, and developing test taking strategies throughout the first two years of coursework, the community colleges and their 4-year partners can work in tandem to break down the barriers to passing high-stakes assessments. In this way, many talented and passionate prospective teacher candidates may have a chance at successfully transitioning to a BA program in education.

Suggestions for planning cross college collaboration might include monthly articulation meetings between community college and university partners to deeply examine curricular outcomes, to analyze the reasons for the grades students receive in classes, and to look at the quality of student work. Further, it is recommended that test taking coaches, or instructors, keep anecdotal notes on individual student performance during test preparation sessions, as these notes could be helpful in individualizing test taking strategies that support student success.

## **Recommendations and Conclusions**

Goldhaber and Walch (2014) report on the trend toward higher standards in teacher education:

Over the past 20 years, there has been a strong policy push toward getting more academically prepared people into the teacher workforce. No Child Left Behind (NCLB), for instance, emphasized academic competence by requiring that prospective teachers either graduate with a major in the subject they are teaching, have credits equivalent to a major, or pass a qualifying test showing competence in the subject. Newly created alternative pathways to certification have sought to bring more

academically-accomplished individuals into the profession. More recently, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) released new standards for teacher training programs, among them, each cohort of entrants should have: a collective grade-point average (GPA) of 3.0, college admission test scores above the national average by 2017, and standing in the top one-third of students by 2020 (p. 40).

As test scores continue to hold a place of importance in the admission criteria for candidates seeking to enter early childhood licensure programs, support for literacy development must be embedded early in the 2-year community college curriculum in lieu of stand-alone test preparation. First and foremost, literacy support must come in classes where the students are already a strong community of learners. Learning in a familiar, comfortable environment lowers anxiety about taking tests, enabling students to focus on developing necessary literacy content and skills. As reported in the exit slips gathered at the conclusion of the “Innovation Workshops,” when students and faculty worked together in a relaxed and stimulating setting, students expressed enthusiasm about continuing on their path toward licensure. The NLU/Triton team believes embedding specific literacy strategies and core skills within coursework will make an impact not only on the cognitive domain of test taking, but in the affective domain as well, with students becoming more confident test takers and better prepared to pass.

Our team also concluded that community colleges and their 4-year partners need to purposefully design 4-year licensure plans with both partners at the table. Putting a sharper lens on the respective programs could help map the road to improved coursework and at the same time, improve the test success of prospective teacher candidates. By working together, institutions can help these “shared” candidates navigate a successful and seamless transition from the 2- to the 4-year experience. Embedding essential content and skill development for test proficiency will support the success of teacher candidates in the first two years as they look toward the high stakes admission requirement. Then, with a successful transition

to the next two years of a licensure program, candidates will be able to focus on advanced content and skill development, including proficiencies in teaching English as a second language and the growth of early literacy.

Early childhood teacher education must be viewed as a four-year program commitment that begins at the community college and ends with the awarding of the baccalaureate degree and teaching license at the 4-year institution. Articulation agreements are only a starting point in the design of 4-year programs that support candidate success. As true partners in teacher preparation, community colleges and 4-year institutions need to roll up their collective sleeves, take a new look at articulation agreements, and identify curricular outcomes and academic supports to be delivered throughout the full four years of coursework. With intentional collaborative planning and innovations in teaching and learning, many college students can be helped to enter the teaching profession as highly qualified and passionate teachers of young children.

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### **Partnership Description**

In 2014, Roosevelt University, William Rainey Harper Community College, and Harold Washington College of the City Colleges of Chicago received a grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education to partner on creating innovative approaches to improving the preparation of early childhood professionals. This particular partnership work, based on an innovation grant, focused on creating a seamless pathway for students to transfer from a community college to a 4-year university. The articulation agreement focus was identified through conversations and anecdotal observations regarding difficulties students had repeatedly faced when attempting to transfer from a 2-year to a 4-year program.

Roosevelt University is an independent, non-profit metropolitan university with one campus in downtown Chicago, Illinois, and another in Schaumburg, Illinois. Roosevelt draws students from the Chicago Metropolitan area as well as the surrounding suburbs. William Rainey Harper Community College is located in Palatine, Illinois, which is a northwestern suburb of Chicago with the majority of students coming from within the district and about 10% out of district. Harold Washington College is one of seven independently accredited colleges that comprise the City Colleges of Chicago with campuses located throughout the Chicago Metropolitan area. Harold Washington College is located downtown in the Chicago Loop. Because of its central location, it draws students from every region of the city. Although the three partners are located in different areas, their collective students are similar. For example, most students across the three programs are working full-time and going to school part-time, and all three programs partner with a variety of early childhood settings within the Chicago metropolitan area and surrounding suburbs.

#### **For More About the Partner Institutions:**

*City Colleges of Chicago:* <http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Pages/Facts-Statistics.aspx>

*Harper College Community Report:* <http://goforward.harpercollege.edu/about/community-report/index.php>

*Roosevelt University:* <https://www.roosevelt.edu/About>