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# Preparing Early Childhood Professionals for the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms and Communities of Illinois

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**Preparing Early Childhood Educators for the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms and Communities of Illinois**

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**Abstract**

Recent Illinois state policies call for mandatory preparation of early childhood educators to address the needs of the large and growing population of young English language learners. University-based early childhood teacher preparation programs across Illinois have responded by integrating content related to cultural and linguistic diversity into existing programs. The authors discuss research and professional literature in support of teacher preparation programs that emphasize field-based experience, particularly clinical experience in culturally and linguistically diverse schools and community organizations. They describe the comprehensive field-based teacher education program at Loyola University of Chicago that was redesigned to address current Illinois policies related to early childhood teacher education. The program, Teaching, Learning, and Leading with Schools and Communities (TLLSC), collaborates with school and community partners in the area to equip teachers to meet the needs of young culturally and linguistically diverse children and their families. Four video vignettes provide examples of and perspectives on participation in the TLLSC program. In these vignettes, childhood administrators, educators, undergraduate students, and teacher preparation faculty discuss their experiences with Loyola's field-based teacher preparation. The authors address implications of early childhood teacher preparation for cultural and linguistic diversity in Illinois.

**Introduction**

The population of the United States continues to become more culturally and linguistically diverse (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010); the state of Illinois exemplifies this increasing diversity. In 2007, U.S. Census data indicated that 2,603,244 Illinois residents over age 5 spoke a language other than English in the home, signifying that 21.8% of Illinois residents—more than 1 in 5 individuals—regularly used a language other than English (Shin & Kominski, 2010). In 2010, only four states in the nation had more speakers of non-English languages than Illinois: California, Texas, New York, and Florida (Shin & Kominski, 2010). Research indicates that 136 languages other than English are represented in Illinois schools (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011), suggesting considerable diversity within the non-English speaking population.

Much of this population is located in and around Chicago, the third largest metropolitan area in the United States, where significant proportions of foreign language speakers reside because of available economic opportunities (Shin & Kominski, 2010). See Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Language Diversity: Top 12 Non-English Languages Used in the Chicago Area

Native Language (L1)	Total # of L1 Users in U.S.	# of L1 Users in Chicago	Chicago total as percentage of U.S. total
Spanish	34,547,077	1,485,524	4.3
Polish	638,059	199,712	31.3
Greek	329,825	44,856	13.6

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Korean	1,062,337	44,618	4.2
Arabic	767,319	43,737	5.7
German	1,104,354	39,757	3.6
Italian	798,801	39,141	4.9
Russian	851,174	39,154	4.6
Urdu	344,942	35,874	10.4
Gujarati	287,367	32,185	11.2
Serbo-Croatian	276,550	31,527	11.4
Hindi	532,911	30,376	5.7

Source: Shin and Kominski (2010)

Suburban areas of northeastern Illinois, including the surrounding communities in Cook County and the “collar counties” of Kane, Lake, DuPage, and Will, have large and rapidly growing culturally and linguistically diverse populations (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011). See Figure 1.

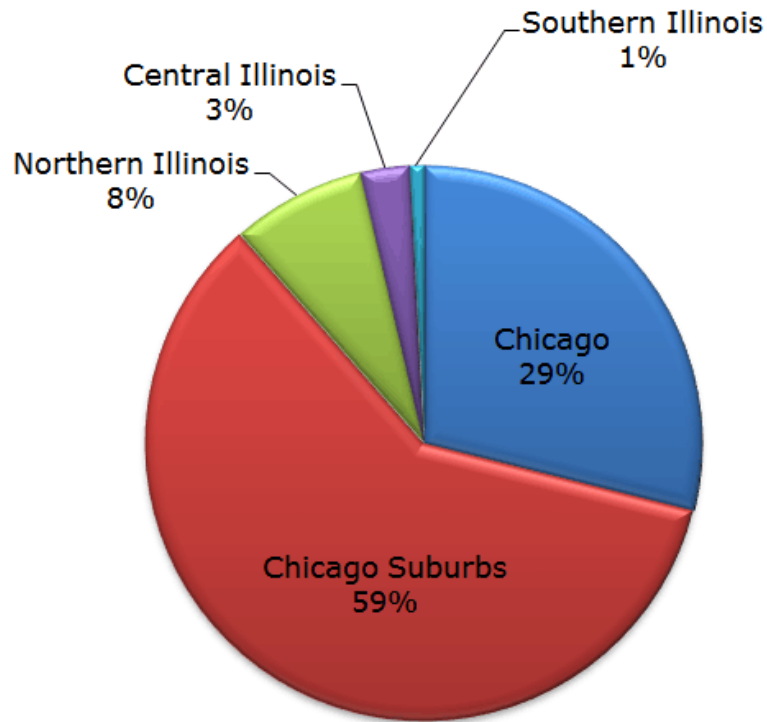


Figure 1. Percentage of English Language Learners in Illinois Schools by Region. Source: Illinois State Board of Education (2011)

Children who are labeled as English language learners (ELLs) typically speak native languages in their homes and communities and enter classrooms and schools with varying levels of proficiency in English (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). Their native languages provide context for learning both the English language and content areas, such as mathematics, science, and social studies (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011). As of 2008, approximately 20% of children entering kindergarten in Illinois were identified as ELLs. This figure rises to 28% within the city of Chicago and higher in nearby suburban areas (Bridges & Dagys, 2012); however, every part of the state is experiencing growing diversity (Illinois State Board of Education, 2011). See Table 2.

**Table 2**  
Language Diversity: Top 12 Native Languages of English Learners in Illinois Schools

Native Language	City of Chicago	Chicago suburbs	Northern Illinois	Central Illinois	Southern Illinois	Total in Illinois
Spanish	45,903	84,754	12,276	3,653	1,078	147,664
Polish	1,083	4,449	132	4	3	5,671
Arabic	904	2,908	191	170	52	4,225
Urdu	619	1,797	55	32	11	2,514
Tagalog	343	1,350	73	59	18	1,843
Gujarati	174	1,484	57	52	26	1,793
Korean	62	1,411	36	143	47	1,699
Vietnamese	368	663	113	123	23	1,290

Russian	62	1,061	80	39	17	1,259
Cantonese	776	321	24	57	16	1,194
Mandarin	210	608	82	175	39	1,114
French	186	261	78	146	8	679

Source: Illinois State Board of Education (2011)

## Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and Illinois Education Policy

Increasing cultural and linguistic diversity has prompted policy makers to require preschool programming that has been designed specifically for bilingual students and ELLs (Malone, 2010; Zehr, 2010). In 2010, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) adopted rules creating the first statewide system of bilingual preschool education in the United States. Amendments to the Illinois School Code (2010) included new provisions affecting both identification and education of preschool-aged ELLs as well as professional development and credentialing of preschool teachers. First, the changes required state-funded preschool programs administered by school districts to screen for non-English languages spoken in the home and to assess children's English language proficiency. In preschools where 20 or more children share the same native language, the state mandated transitional bilingual education for children to receive native language support. In settings with several linguistic backgrounds, English as a second language (ESL) services are required (Illinois State Board of Education, 2010). The first of their kind, these policy mandates are intended to significantly increase access of young ELLs to bilingual education, including native and second-language support, across the state (Malone, 2010). Illinois school districts and preschool programs must adapt their assessment and instruction to the policy requirements; this includes selecting and implementing culturally and linguistically appropriate curricula and tools for screening and assessment. Such practices are also recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009).

The priority of addressing the needs of ELL children and their families extends to other agencies serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Illinois follow the national Head Start Program Performance Standards, which require educators to support children in their native language and in English while providing culturally sensitive and appropriate child and family services in accordance with the principles of developmentally appropriate practice (Office of Head Start, 2008). The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 builds upon these requirements, emphasizing professional development for educators that focuses on the needs of children with limited English proficiency; immigrant, refugee, and asylee families; and children of migrant or seasonal farmworker families (Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007). Early Head Start programs also support home language as well as culture and family literacy by maximizing infants' and toddlers' consistent access to teachers who understand families' cultures and who, ideally, speak the first language of the families they serve (Early Head Start National Resource Center, 2001).

Expectations of early childhood professional preparation have also changed to ensure that teachers have adequate knowledge and skills to meet the developmental needs of young ELLs (García & Frede, 2010; Severns, 2010). The Illinois State Board of Education (2010) extended policies beyond bilingual and ESL programming to require specific preparation, credentialing, and professional development of early childhood educators. By 2014, all teachers who serve children in bilingual and ESL preschool settings will be required to have corresponding endorsements on their Illinois teaching licenses. The endorsements consist of at least 18 university credit hours of instruction and 100 clinical hours with culturally and linguistically diverse students (Illinois State Board of Education, 2013). Preschool providers are also required to participate in professional development to build their understanding and competencies in language acquisition and culture (Illinois State Board of Education, 2010).

At the time these rules passed, less than 1% of early childhood educators in Illinois had bilingual or ESL certification, and few teacher education programs offered preparation leading to these credentials (Bridges & Dagys, 2012). Since then, teacher education programs in public, private, two-year, and four-year institutions across Illinois have collaborated to incorporate content that promotes teacher candidates' effectiveness with culturally and linguistically diverse learners in early childhood settings (Illinois Resource Center, 2013) by adjusting existing course content, adding new courses and field experiences, or instituting new endorsement programs.

In this paper, we describe how Loyola University of Chicago prepares early childhood educators for cultural and linguistic diversity in schools and communities. We begin by grounding our work in the related literature

### Community-based Teacher Preparation

Scholars (García, Arias, Harris Murri, & Serna, 2010) and organizations (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2010; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010) recognize the central role of clinical experiences and of school and community partnerships in preparing culturally and linguistically responsive teachers (Gay, 2010; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). Research suggests that university and community collaborations for teacher preparation have direct positive impact on teacher candidates (Kruger, Davies, Eckersley, Newell, & Cherednichenko, 2009) by providing opportunities to interact in diverse educational settings and experience community-specific methods of teaching and learning (Murrell, 2000). Practice-based

approaches to learning (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Murrell, 2000) are seen as enhancing candidates' resiliency and cultural understandings (McDonald et al., 2011) and providing authentic, accurate, and thorough preparation for responding to the needs of students in a variety of settings (García et al., 2010).

University-community partnerships engage community teachers and leaders as co-teacher educators (McDonald et al., 2011; Murrell, 2000). These individuals' cultural competence regarding their neighborhoods, along with their dedication to sustaining local schools and communities, enables them to facilitate teacher candidates' understanding of the roles of family and community in the lives of the children they work with (McDonald et al., 2011). Community members encourage candidates to use this knowledge to develop culturally relevant teaching strategies and are often described as more influential in candidates' understandings of diversity than university faculty (McDonald et al., 2011). Participating university faculty members monitor and explicitly link the candidates' community-based experiences to instructional content (Zeichner, 2006). Structured experiences in diverse settings are seen as supporting teacher candidates' personal and professional development by promoting their understanding of and commitment to such settings (Murrell, 2000; Zeichner, 2006).

Community-based teacher education engages candidates in authentic experiences with teaching and learning in diverse communities where they will teach (Murrell, 2000). Candidates cultivate teaching practices gradually in low-risk settings before entering high-stakes classroom situations (e.g., student teaching), consistent with the developmental process of learning how to teach (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Ongoing exposure to unique and diverse community and school settings helps them develop knowledge and skills for culturally and linguistically responsive practice (García et al., 2010). Research suggests that community-embedded partnerships and experiences allow candidates to engage with social justice issues (Murrell, 2000); reconsider stereotypes of diverse youth (Gildin & Onore, 2010); dismantle assumptions about poverty and diverse communities (McDonald et al., 2011); understand the value of informal, community-based learning experiences (Gildin & Onore, 2010); and recognize the assets and resources of families, homes, and communities (Burant & Kirby, 2002; McDonald et al., 2011).

Scholars have called upon early childhood teacher education programs to bridge theory and course content to field experience and practices in order to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse child population (Lim & Able-Boone, 2005; Ragan, 2000; Rust, 2010). To that end, they have advocated field placements that prepare educators to teach young children from backgrounds different from their own (Ragan, 2000). Scholars have also recommended active university-community partnerships that place coursework into the field, where faculty and community practitioners can co-teach and mentor candidates (Lim & Able-Boone, 2005). Nevertheless, related research indicates that traditional teacher preparation programs seldom bridge practice and theory (Ragan, 2000), do little to influence candidates' cultural understandings (Lim & Able-Boone, 2005), and incorporate little school and community involvement (Hyun, 2001). Absent from examples of practice are university-community partnerships that provide authentic experiences to prepare candidates for teaching in diverse early childhood settings (Murrell, 2000; Zeichner, 2006).

## Teaching, Learning, and Leading with Schools and Communities

Building upon this related literature and organizational calls for clinically based teacher education (American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, 2010; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2010), Loyola University of Chicago's teacher education program develops partnerships with a range of schools and community organizations to equip future educators to meet the needs of young culturally and linguistically diverse children.

### Field-based Teacher Preparation through Partnerships

Loyola's teacher education program, Teaching, Learning, and Leading with Schools and Communities (TLLSC), uses an innovative four-year model designed by teacher preparation faculty. Planned using backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), TLLSC recognizes that every teacher needs certain enduring understandings, knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become a professional committed to social justice who can meet the educational needs of every student. Candidates engage in a series of entirely field-based modules and sequences at diverse urban and suburban, public and private, school- and community-based educational institutions, progressing through three professional development phases across four years to explore, concentrate, and specialize in early childhood education for cultural and linguistic diversity (Castro, Ayankoya, & Kasprzak, 2011; Division of Early Childhood, 2010).

TLLSC not only takes place *in* schools and communities but also engages teacher preparation faculty *with* partners in program design and implementation. School and community partners function as co-teacher-educators with shared responsibility for preparing teachers, improving education, and ultimately supporting and impacting child development and achievement. Partners have contributed to the development and implementation of TLLSC curriculum and instruction by identifying particular areas of expertise, hosting clinical experiences, and mentoring teacher candidates in collaboration with faculty. Schools and community organizations have also identified areas for their own growth, as TLLSC partnerships are reciprocal and mutually beneficial (Kruger et al., 2009) with all participants co-constructing knowledge around the education of children from birth through high school graduation.

## Early Childhood Teacher Development for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

Responding to the needs of school and community partners, Loyola faculty committed early on to preparing all teacher candidates to teach all students, focusing particularly on culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. They adopted a targeted and integrated approach to prepare all candidates to be effective with culturally and linguistically diverse students, corresponding to Illinois state policy recommendations for early childhood professional preparation (Illinois State Board of Education, 2010). Field experiences, instruction, and support are integrated throughout the program (Division for Early Childhood, 2010). Candidates participate in a series of modules (clinical experiences of variable length) to develop knowledge, skills, and disposition related to language and culture (Castro et al., 2011). Following recommendations by scholars (e.g., Valdés, Bunch, Snow, & Lee, 2005), this approach (a) targets foundations central to teaching ELLs in the exploration phase, (b) extends foundations specifically to young children in the concentration phase, and (c) integrates cultural and linguistic diversity into authentic practice with early childhood teaching and learning in the specialization phase.



Figure 2: TLLSC Phases and Sequences  
[View PDF](#)

The exploration phase begins in freshman year and takes place over three semesters, during which candidates fulfill state ESL endorsement requirements related to linguistics, foundations, cross-cultural methods, and assessment. In this phase, candidates first learn theory and practice for working with culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and communities through participation in modules that include field placements. Instruction focuses on topics related to language, learning, and development, including first-language development, second-language acquisition, and foundational linguistic principles (Valdés et al., 2005). In the second sequence of this phase, candidates explore ways to use student, family, and community funds of knowledge (Moll & González, 1997) to inform culturally and linguistically responsive learning environments and instruction (Gay, 2010; Lucas et al., 2008). During the third sequence of the exploration phase, candidates investigate macrolevel educational policies related to cultural and linguistic diversity and ELL students and observe how these policies are applied (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). Candidates then shift to microlevel classroom practice with individual students (Thompson, 2008), conducting and analyzing authentic assessments of their sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic development (Herrera, 2010). Assessing individual young learners (Espinosa, 2010) enables candidates to recognize the unique social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, cultural, linguistic, and academic factors that contribute to development and achievement (Heineke, Coleman, Ferrell, & Kersemeier, 2012; Wrigley, 2000).

In the concentration phase, early childhood teacher candidates concentrate specifically on culturally and linguistically diverse infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. They explore use of authentic assessment (Espinosa, 2010; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009) and developmentally appropriate practice to meet language needs of young children with special needs (Cheatham, Santos, & Ro, 2007). Additionally, candidates explore the central role of home and community experiences in building language abilities and supporting bilingualism during early childhood (Rodríguez, 2010). Candidates then learn ways to promote young ELL's linguistic development during small- and whole-group classroom instruction in literacy (August & Shanahan, 2006) and content areas (Galindo, 2010). They incorporate principles and strategies for teaching young culturally and linguistically diverse students into the practice of instructional design and implementation in preschool settings. Sequences in the concentration phase emphasize transdisciplinary collaboration. Early

childhood professionals share and exchange roles in assessment, instruction, and intervention (e.g., Linder, 2008), blending these practices with a focus on teaching with a global framework (Landerholm, Gehrie, & Hao, 2004), within which principles of inclusion, cooperation, social action, and cultural interdependence are interwoven. During the three semesters of the concentration phase, candidates fulfill the methods and elective requirements for the state ESL endorsement.

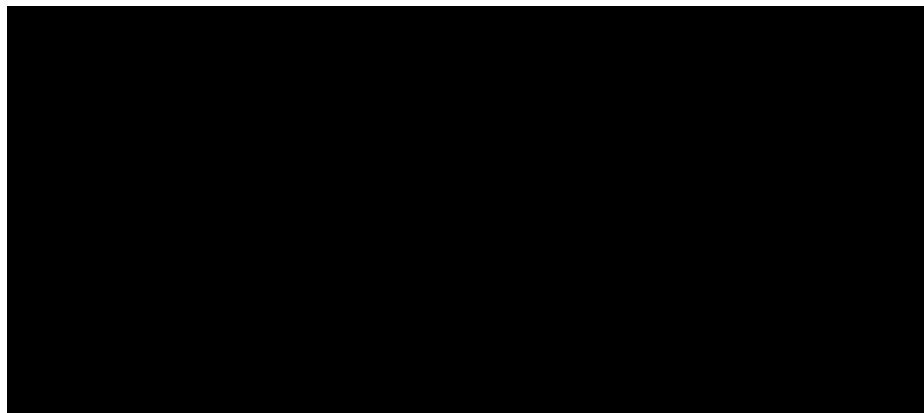
Candidates enter the specialization phase in the final year of the degree program when they participate in one-year internships in elementary and early childhood special education classrooms. This final phase integrates cultural and linguistic diversity into daily teaching and learning (Division for Early Childhood, 2010). In the first semester, candidates co-teach with cooperating early childhood educators, fostering culturally and linguistically responsive, language-rich classroom environments while incorporating principles and strategies for teaching a diverse population of young children (Ragan, 2000; Lucas et.al, 2008). The second semester is the student teaching experience and final semester of the TLLSC program, when candidates incorporate and apply all principles and strategies for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students into the authentic practice of instructional design and implementation. With the support of school- and university-based co-teacher educators, candidates collect, analyze, and reflect upon authentic assessment data (Espinosa, 2010) to ensure that they are having a positive impact on students' sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic development (Herrera, 2010). They also complete extensive clinical hours of classroom practice with young English language learners and meet the requirements for an endorsement in early childhood special education.


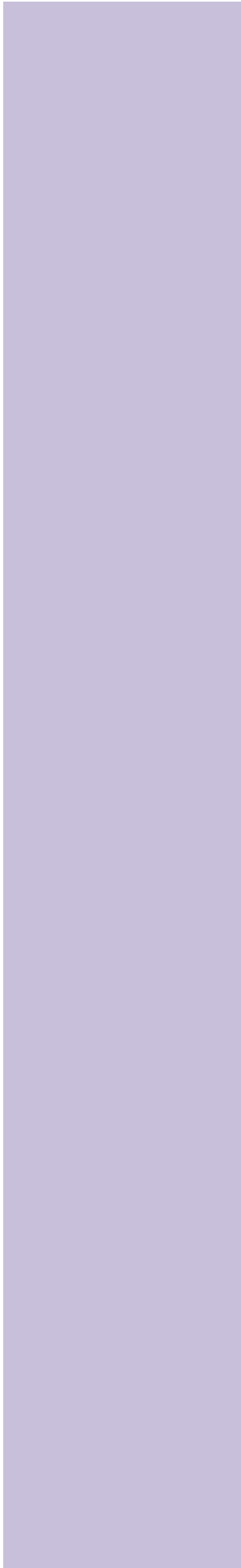
Throughout the three phases of the four-year early childhood teacher education program, candidates participate in professional learning communities (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006) facilitated by faculty members with expertise in early childhood. Within these learning communities, teacher candidates share learning from various school-based experiences, apply learning through completion of summative assessments, and synthesize learning through reflection and discussion. Professional learning communities serve as the touchstone of teaching and learning in the TLLSC program, bringing together candidates within specialty areas and across phases of the four-year continuum to make meaning of their experiences in teaching, learning, and leading with young children in schools and communities. By engaging candidates in meaningful interaction with other novice (candidates) and veteran (faculty) early childhood educators, professional learning communities promote the development and application of knowledge, skills, and dispositions within early childhood and increase candidates' expertise in cultural and linguistic diversity in specific contexts and communities (Castro et al., 2011; Division for Early Childhood, 2010).

### **Examples of Teacher Preparation with Diverse Schools and Communities**

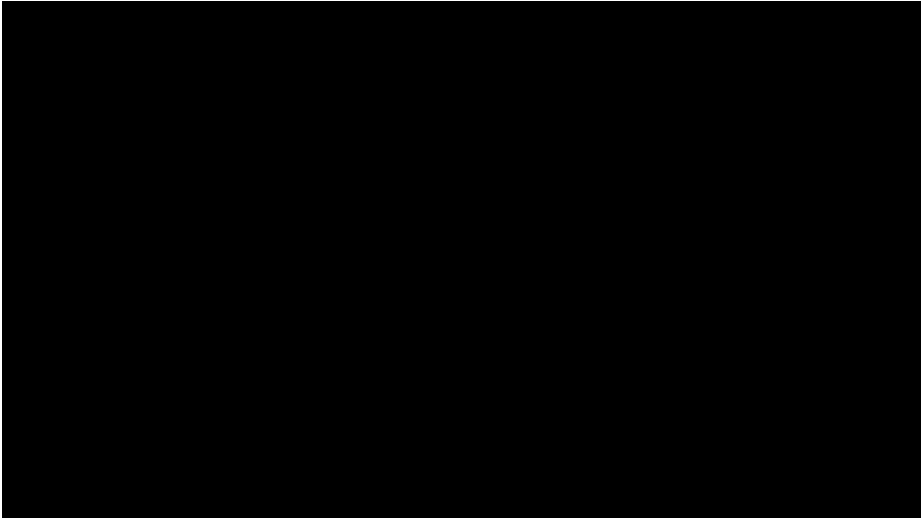
The TLLSC program relies on the participation of school and community partners to provide a four-year field-based teacher education experience. At Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago, working with infants and toddlers from homes where Chinese and African languages are spoken, candidates recognize and support young children's first-language development, linguistic development, and second-language acquisition (Severns, 2010). At Bateman Elementary School in the highly diverse neighborhood of Albany Park, candidates experience the complexity of early childhood education as they assess and target children's social, emotional, cultural, and linguistic development and needs (Espinosa, 2010; Heineke et al., 2012; Herrera, 2010; Wrigley, 2000). Candidates at Bateman and Hayt elementary schools learn ways to incorporate children's cultures and languages into the classroom community (Castro et al., 2011; Division for Early Childhood, 2010) to create learning environments where all children can feel safe and comfortable. They also engage with families in activities that range from parent-teacher conferences to literacy nights and parent ambassador groups (Noel, 2010).

The video vignettes below feature school and community partners who have been involved in the TLLSC program: early childhood administrators, educators, undergraduate students, and teacher preparation faculty. The participants share their perspectives on Loyola's field-based teacher education program and their general views on preparation of early childhood educators for the culturally and linguistically diverse communities of Illinois. (See Appendix for transcripts. Note: Because of uneven sound in some clips, it may be necessary to adjust your speaker volume when viewing them.)






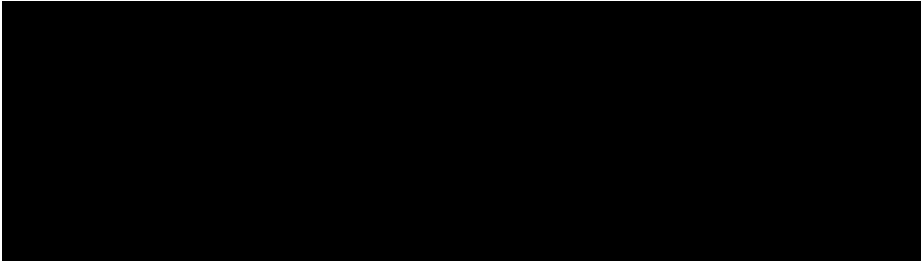
*Video 1: Community organization leader Cathy Rokusek describes collaboration between Loyola and Easter Seals Near Southside Child Development Center. Length: 6 minutes, 13 seconds*



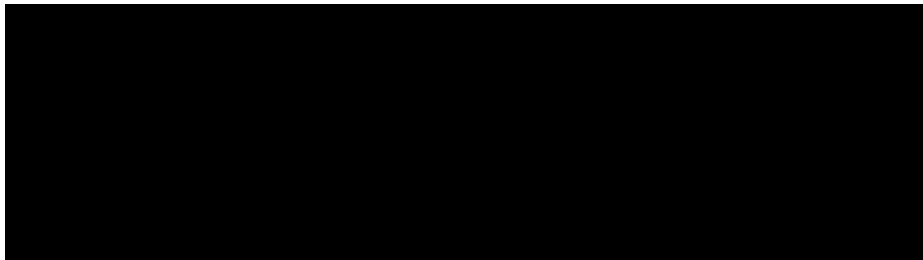
*Video 2: Patrick Baccillieri and Fabiola Ginski, administrators at Newton Bateman Elementary School, discuss Loyola students' growth during field experiences at the school in Chicago's Albany Park neighborhood. Length: 6 minutes, 8 seconds*



*Video 3: Mary Ellen Bleeden, a clinical assistant professor and professional development school site supervisor at Loyola University Chicago, reflects on the long-term collaboration with Hayt Elementary School, where Loyola students may be placed for the one-year internship. Length: 3 minutes, 7 seconds*







*Video 4: Loyola University Chicago teacher candidates Cindy Herrera and Naomi Malutan reflect on their experiences in the TLLSC program. Length: 4 minutes, 50 seconds*

## **Implications for Early Childhood Professional Preparation in Illinois**

Illinois is breaking ground in early childhood education policy and practice. The increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of young children across the state creates a need for well-prepared teachers who are knowledgeable about ESL or bilingual education. Collaborations such as those shown here between Loyola's early childhood teacher education program and a range of Chicago schools and community organizations have the potential to equip future educators to work effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. The Chicago partner sites and neighborhoods in the video vignettes are representative of the diversity across Illinois. Their participation demonstrates that purposeful collaboration among educational stakeholders can be mutually beneficial and can play a central role in helping teacher candidates to value and make use of family and community funds of knowledge.

Acknowledging that teacher expertise develops through authentic interactions with children and families in educational settings, the TLLSC program recognizes the value of early clinical experiences (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Lim & Able-Boone, 2005). Extended field experiences enable candidates to go beyond reading static textbooks and discussing generic early childhood education in university classrooms, providing opportunities to infuse practice with emergent understandings and to refine practice over time. As they approach student teaching after seven semesters of clinically embedded teacher education under the direct supervision of early childhood faculty, teacher candidates such as the two in Vignette 4 have competencies specific to teaching young culturally and linguistically diverse children as well as the confidence, knowledge, and skills needed to be effective with all young children on their first day in the classroom.

Community-based teacher preparation can also support effective relationships between candidates and diverse families. Having significant interactions with children's support networks helps teacher candidates recognize individual children's unique family structures and situations. They also become aware of families' language and literacy practices as well as the importance of the extended family in many culturally and linguistically diverse households. These opportunities can promote recognition that family and community funds of knowledge are resources that can enhance both children's development and classroom instruction.

Community-based teacher preparation programs such as Loyola's are well-positioned to enhance early childhood education in general. Such partnerships can benefit schools and community organizations because their teachers and administrators collaborate with university faculty and teacher candidates to target specific school initiatives and improve overall educational practice (Ragan, 2000). As preschool and elementary school stakeholders such as the Newton Bateman Elementary administrators in Vignette 3 maneuver the complex environment of public education, an "all-hands-on-deck approach" enables teacher candidates, cooperating teachers and leaders, and university faculty members to navigate the new demands and dynamics of educational policy and practice in the state (Illinois State Board of Education, 2010, 2013; State of Illinois, 2010). As noted in Video 4, teacher candidates, teachers, and—most importantly—children can benefit from holistic community-based field experience when all partners enter as learners and recognize one another's assets (Burant & Kirby, 2002; McDonald et al, 2011; Moll & González, 1997).

As the population of the United States continues to diversify and large numbers of young children enter early care and education settings as ELLs, more states are likely to follow the lead of Illinois and make significant changes to educational policy and practice. Effective preparation of early childhood educators must involve teacher candidates' direct engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. School and community partnerships with varied early childhood settings, such as those in Loyola's TLLSC teacher preparation program, have the potential to strengthen the capacity of teachers, schools, and organizations to serve the needs of increasingly diverse communities.

## **Dedication and Acknowledgements**

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We dedicate this article to the memory of Harriette Herrera, a passionate and inspiring early childhood educator who dedicated her life to improving education for culturally and linguistically diverse young children in Illinois.

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## Appendix Video Vignette Transcripts

### Video 1: Community Organization Leader

**Narrator:** Easter Seals Near Southside Child Development Center sits at the crossroads of several near Southside Chicago communities including Chinatown. It serves 56 children ages 0 to 3 and their families through full-day childcare and comprehensive family services that include parent training, developmental screening, mental health consultation and referral and support services. At the present time 81% of these children are African American, and English is their first language, with approximately 15% from Cantonese speaking Chinese families. The program also serves children of families who speak Spanish or a variety of African languages. Near Southside is part of Easter Seals Metropolitan Chicago, a not-for-profit agency primarily serving people with disabilities with a strong focus on families considered low-income. The organization addresses these needs through its childhood family connections intervention offices, therapeutic schools for children with autism, ages 6 to 21, and Head Start, early Head Start and childcare programs such as Near Southside.

**Cathy Rokusek:** We do have partnerships with a couple of different colleges, including Loyola, where their early childhood students come here for an extended field experience with us, where they're here one or more times a week over the course of several weeks or a semester and they're both observing in the classroom but also interacting with children to at least some extent, and they are doing some sort of assignments to go with their field experience.

And in the case of the Loyola students, they were here over an extended period of time and some of the things that I do think were different or unique, one was the amount of collaboration that as far as just brainstorming maybe the order of assignments that the students were going to have to fit with where they were developmentally and then also in terms of what kind of support our teachers could be available to them for.

One of the things that was important, I know that you [the faculty] wanted them to actually have the experience of doing part of a lesson plan, creating it, and then initiating it in the classroom. And so we were able to accommodate that. That doesn't always happen in all field experiences that are here.

To have the instructor actually on site all of the days that the students were here, that was definitely different. I think that then they were able to see more support. You were able to see them not just one time but to see them multiple times in the classroom and give them individualized support, and I think you met with them each day at the end. After they all came out of their individual classrooms, they all met as a group with their instructor, and so to me it felt more like an advanced practice seminar rather than an early-level class.

I think for the students definitely having a lot of experiences, starting early in their teacher preparation with different populations of students, I think is really valuable so that they're able to really start getting comfortable with children of different ages, abilities with and without special needs, different cultural backgrounds, because I think then by the time they're actually entering the profession, they will feel some greater sense of competence

and confidence going into it. And then I think then that parents pick up on that, children pick up on that. I kind of especially think parents, and then they respond positively, and then I think the teachers respond positively back, and I think it gets things going in a good direction and they have some of that feeling pretty early on. And I think it then also makes them more open to learning more because they're already feeling like they've learned some good skills that they already have.

And then for our teachers here, I think it is really valuable to them to be able—I think they really like passing on some of their knowledge and their experience to new teachers. And I also think it's good for their professional development because the students are asking them questions that at this point they might be taking for granted, but that it's really good for them to actually think about specifically again and really think about their answers and think about their own practice. So I think that, that's really valuable. And then the children really love to have people who are interested in them. That's just great to have additional people to talk to and to read to them and all that.

I think, going along with the field experiences like we already talked about, I think them getting training on the current best research, best knowledge of practice in the area of linguistic development, I think is really important so that they know the differences between a child learning just one language, learning two or more languages—what that means in the classroom, how to support the home language, how to convey that importance to parents. I think all that is really important.

And as far as the cultural piece, I definitely think that learning about cultural sensitivity and awareness is obviously key because it just makes them aware of that and it cultivates openness to that, but I also think that the best way to learn, though, about the cultures of our families is directly from our families. And so I think it just ties in. I think that they are getting relationship-based training and maybe more preparation specifically about communicating with parents and understanding how important it's going to look different in different cultures but all parents have such hopes for their children and I think that for teachers to really be grounded in that, I think that's going to serve them well both with families of their own culture and that it's also going to let them be interested in learning about other cultures.

## Video 2: School Administrators

**Narrator:** Situated in the northwest side neighborhood of Albany Park, one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse communities in both Chicago and the U.S., Bateman Elementary School serves approximately 1,000 Pre-K to [eighth-grade] students. Boasting over 50,000 people with a high percentage of foreign-born residents, the Albany Park population includes residents from Mexico, Central America, Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Located in a predominantly Mexican enclave of a larger two-square-mile urban area, this neighborhood elementary school serves predominantly Latino students with four in five students from Hispanic descent and two in five students labeled as ELLs. Approximately 90% of students are considered low-income. Due to the new Illinois state policy corresponding with the linguistic diversity of communities, Bateman offers bilingual and ESL preschool to meet the needs of the neighborhood's diverse residents.

**Fabiola Ginski:** Any teacher, you have to have a passion for the profession and reverence for the potential that each child holds. We also have to know the pedagogy so what works. Research has shown that certain things work with children at that particular age.

Also, another particular setting we talked about is diversity in our school. This is one of the most diverse neighborhood in the city, but in the entire country, the last census said. So they have to get to know our children's background and honor that and bring it into the fold. They are inviting the family, getting to know the family but also incorporating in the large sense themselves. Integrating the native language is very, very important. We know that. Studies have shown that exposure to meaningful rich language exposure—it is especially beneficial for the brain, especially at that age with the elasticity of the brain zero to three and beyond. So all of these things we feel are very important for our teachers to have, and we encourage that in the teachers that are here, and we want that in the new teachers, the new breed of teachers as well, for the school as well.

**Dr. Patrick Baccellieri:** And then I think the other thing is early childhood is we all know it's a fairly complex time of life and the amount of growth that takes place during that time period I think is greater than any other time. Probably adolescence is second. But I think that because of that growth, it's not like it's even or predictable. There's physical development, there's social and emotional development. There's cognitive development, and we have 25 children in the room and they're all at a different point even though they may be the same age. It's a complex environment, and to work with students and to work with Fabiola around that space—and then when you have language acquisition on top of that—it's pretty complex. So to work to figure that out together, I think is going to be really important.

But I think for the student teachers, it's going to be really critical for them and for us too is to really better find out what those stages are and what those kind of benchmarks are and what it means to be a success—where the success is and what does that look like. And so I think to clear up a little bit around expectations, I think that could help beyond our school as well.

**Fabiola Ginski:** It's been quite exciting for me personally to see for the first time that we had this meeting

around this very table where they were shy and doubting themselves. Can I do this? They were very nervous and to see at the end ... they were not only [taking] charge—"I can do this"—they were full-fledged teachers. So that no longer doubting themselves but to actually see them thinking back, that's the most exciting part. And also see that when they left the children, when they parted with the children, there was [a change] from the [initial] nervousness ("I don't know you") to "My goodness, what am I going to do tomorrow when you're not here, teacher?" There's been a lot of growth.

**Dr. Patrick Baccellieri:** We know that some of the candidates on their last day were saying good-bye to families and things like that.

So they had made connections throughout their time because they were here and especially in the early childhood group where they see parents a lot. I think for the upper grade and the middle school, it's a little bit different because they're not dropping their kids off as close to the classroom as everyone else and things like that. And I think with the early childhood group, they did get very attached because they were part of the day-to-day routines.

**Fabiola Ginski:** In particular, there was a student teacher candidate that we had for the entire year who really forged strong bonds with some of the parents, including a group that would look in the morning to come and speak to her or if the teacher wasn't available. So that was one of the really good—being able to forge those bonds of trust and communication, and she did.

### Video 3: University Site Supervisor

**Narrator:** Hayt Elementary School is home to approximately 975 Pre-K to eighth-grade students. Situated in the northside Chicago neighborhood of Edgewater, a community with a diverse mix of social classes, ethnicities, and languages, Hayt predominantly serves culturally and linguistically diverse families with 50% of the school's students from Hispanic descent and 20% of Asian descent as well as 90% of students labeled as low-income and 40% labeled as ELLs. To meet the diverse needs of students from 35 distinct linguistic backgrounds, Hayt offers both bilingual and ESL education in the primary years. Building on an already existing partnership to prepare Chicago-area early childhood teachers, Hayt has been a professional development school of the Loyola University Chicago School of Education for over a decade.

**Mary Ellen Bleeden:** I think Loyola's been a part of that school for about 12 to 15 years. As a site supervisor of the one-year internship, I know we've had students there for 12 years participating in classrooms with teachers for a whole year. In addition, there's a morning math tutoring program. There are students who come after school to help out and then there are other student teachers who are doing special ed placements in the building also.

I think the one-year internship prepares students to an extent that could never happen in a 15-week program. The dialogue between myself as a university supervisor and the students is an ongoing dialogue between reflections that they write for me every week, meetings we have, preconferences, observations, postconferences, data reviews. It's all a process, and it's a slow process. It doesn't happen instantly. As the year progresses, students take more and more of a role in the classroom. They start out observing, but then they're doing small groups. They're co-teaching. They're doing parallel teaching. They're doing differentiation. They're having tons of experiences.

One of the most important pieces is that they really have to respect the children's background. Kids come out of rich families, and children have rich family lives. They have their language. They have their foods. They have their cultures, and I think that has to be accepted and honored because that's who the child is. So then I think the next step is how do they welcome all that diversity into a classroom? Bring them to a classroom community that is a community, where everybody is important. Everybody is accepted.

It has a great impact on classroom teachers, and classroom teachers have a great impact on Loyola. Loyola is going out of its way to make sure that our students start from freshman year with hands-on practical experiences, and I think our program can only get better by doing that.

### Video 4: Teacher Candidates

**Speaker 1:** Loyola's taking us a step in this direction is having diverse experience as soon as possible and being in there because it's one thing to sit in class and talk about diverse culture and this and that, and it's another thing to be in there and experience the reality of it, and I think being in there as soon as possible gives you time to grow over those years.

**Speaker 2:** We're learning from them, but at the same time, there's things that they're learning from us so how they can benefit what we're bringing in. I know a lot of the times my cooperating teacher will ask what are you doing in the classroom? What are you learning? You're keeping most current to the things because you're in school right now. We haven't been in school.

I think it's interesting to look at, even though I was told there was cultural and linguistic diversity within the population of parents, even if some of them didn't fully speak English, they knew as much as the teacher, they

also had an important role in their child's education, and that should be more of a partnership whereas at Ortiz, where I was teaching for second grade, I felt like the parents were a lot like what do you think? It was also working towards raising their self-esteem. Even though you might not know how to read or you don't see any value in how you can help incorporate and finding ways to help some of them. It's not just mom or dad, but it's an extended family that's coming in and being supportive. And some of the kids are like, why is your so and so coming in? That's not your mom or dad. So I guess also opening the eyes of the kids, like family and the people involved in your life doesn't only have to be mom, dad, sibling, but also the grandparents. The importance of extended family and them being also involved.

**Speaker 1:** I felt a lot more confident and going into my elementary school experience, I was ready to jump into that role, and my cooperating teacher even mentioned that. She said you seem ready for this. And I think she was also more open, and I was also more confident and open, and I think that ended up being a really great collaborative relationship from the beginning, even when I was still doing clinicals. It wasn't like she was a teacher and I was a visitor. She helped me step into that role of a teacher right away.

**Speaker 2:** Within any classroom you bring your own knowledge, your own history, your own experiences. The kids bring their own. For my student teaching experience at the secondary level at Ortiz, I brought my own, the kids brought their own, and my cooperating teacher brought her own but because we're from the same culture with the kids, yes, there was just a lot of differences that we had but there was that commonality ground that we had—their experiences or things that they would bring up. I understood what they were talking about, so together we would explain to my cooperating teacher or we would find ways to explain it, and sometimes she was like, I don't know what you're talking about. But at the same time, she was learning from us, and then she would also bring in her experience and we would learn from her. Just letting them know that there are all these other doors open. I felt that not only were the kids learning but I was also learning.

**Speaker 1:** I think one thing as a teacher now—it's not the future anymore. It's weird. Looking at your kids as people that each have their own culture, each have their own difference, and myself have my own. I have my own things I bring into the table. And I think it's important to find a way for them to be able to share those experiences, to share those funds of knowledge, to use them to help each other grow and finding out how to do that. But I think it's really important to make that part of the learning experience. It's not just coming to school and learning math and phonics and reading. It's bringing in those experiences and those funds of knowledge and making it more meaningful and making it a real learning experience.



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