



Official Newsletter of the Illinois Subdivision of the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children

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A Message from the IDEC President *Mary-alayne Hughes, Ph.D.*

Greetings! I hope all of you were able to attend the Sharing A Vision (SAV) Conference in October 2007. There were wonderful keynote speakers and a "first ever" special concert for children and families, with Dot Kane performing. In addition, there were exhibits, a Creative Expressions art gallery, a "project approach" model classroom, and more than 100 workshops and presentations. IDEC is very proud to sponsor and assist in the coordination of such a great professional development opportunity for teachers and early intervention service providers in Illinois! Planning for the SAV 2009 Conference will begin in Fall 2008. If you are interested in being a member of the conference planning committee, please watch for information in upcoming IDEC newsletters.

As I was contemplating what else to include in this message, I struggled with what to say. Maybe because winter has set in, it feels like there is not much going on. But then it occurred to me that there is something extremely important going on – the Presidential race! Now more than ever, it is important to participate in the political process. "Participating" means gathering information about the various candidates' views in order to make an informed choice. Of particular importance are issues that effect children, including health care, education, and services for families of children with delays or disabilities. "Participating" also means taking the time and effort to vote. It isn't easy to wait in a long line to vote, especially if you start thinking about all the other things that are on your "to do" list. So my idea is to put "vote" at the top of that list. I hope you will too!

You may contact Mary-alayne Hughes at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, College of Education: mahughes@uiuc.edu, phone (217) 333-0260, or fax (217) 333-6555.

Illinois Subdivision
of the Division for
Early Childhood of
the Council for
Exceptional
Children

Upcoming Events

IL Action for Children

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IL Council for Exceptional Children

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IL Association for Education of Young Children

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Division of Early Children

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What a Difference a Year Makes! By Lesley Roberts

After 13 years as a School Psychologist in the Illinois public schools, it has not become any easier to explain to parents after an evaluation why the team needs to put a categorical label on their child in order for them to get Special Education services. In most cases, parents have understood this necessary evil,

but that is usually for two reasons. First, some parents see the label as a diagnosis of sorts, and therefore an explanation of their child's difficulties. They can now say, "Well, my child is Learning Disabled, and this is why..." or "my child is getting speech therapy." Both of these labels are common (sometimes

misunderstood, but common in Special Education nonetheless). These meetings usually run pretty smoothly, and the student, though labeled, is able to get specialized attention.

The Illinois State Board of Education has also changed several labels over the past few years, vacillating

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From a Child's Eyes by Lisa Ellis

Susie's* mother, Mary*, describes her daughter as a happy 2 and half year old who enjoys dancing, animals, and the outdoors. As an infant, Mary noticed that Susie seemed to always be taking in the world with her eyes. However, she didn't suspect the root of her daughter's use of her sense of vision might be a hearing impairment. They learned about this after a hearing exam at the age of thirteen months. This exam and further testing revealed Susie had a sensorineural hearing loss. This was particularly surprising for their family since Susie had passed her newborn hearing test and had also been receiving early intervention services based on a global assessment she had at the age of six months.

Mary has lots of experience being an advocate for her children since Susie is not the first of Mary's children to be diagnosed with a disability. Yet she has had to advocate for Susie in a lot of ways which are different than her other children. "I think that involvement [in therapy and service delivery] is up to the parent," Mary says. She has been able to make informed decisions about many things thanks to her own knowledge as well as that of parents who are a part of an internet support group for children

with hearing impairments. "[These emails] are always the first thing I go to when I check my email," she said. Early intervention providers also have been an important source of information for Mary. For example, Mary and her husband decided to proceed with a getting their daughter a cochlear implant. She remembers the experience of having to quickly decide which implant to get with a limited amount of knowledge about the pros and cons of each. Her child's speech language pathologist and developmental therapist for the hearing impaired were very helpful with this decision. In addition, these therapists and others always have Mary's entire family in mind when they come across new resources.

Susie's family and service providers have also made many collaborative decisions about Susie's early intervention services. She doesn't find separate parent-provider or provider to provider meetings to be helpful in this collaborative process. One decision was choosing to take an oral approach to Susie learning to communicate. While at some point mom would like Susie to learn how to use sign language this is not a current intervention focus. Mary feels that early intervention is a time when Susie can learn speech and

learning sign can come later. Mary has also maintained some in-home services when Susie began attending a school for children with hearing impairments. She has also found it to be extremely helpful when service coordinators and providers take the time to research disability specific services and resources. In the future, Mary would like for Susie to be in a school setting which includes children with and without hearing impairments.

*Names have been changed to protect the confidentiality of family members.



Membership Matters! Come and join us!!!

The [Division for Early Childhood\(DEC\)](#) of the [Council for Exceptional Children \(CEC\)](#) is a nonprofit organization advocating for individuals who work or on behalf of children with special needs, birth through age eight, and their families.

Founded in 1973, DEC, promotes publications and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities.

Here's a sampling of membership benefits:

- Access to CEC publications such as, Exceptional Children, Teaching Exceptional Children, and CEC Today Plus, DEC Publications such as the Journal of Early Intervention and Young Exceptional Children.
- Discounts on resources and materials specifically for special educators.
- Professional development opportunities, such as the CEC Annual Convention and Expo and the DEC Conference.
- Networking opportunities for professional support.
- Online Member-Only discussion forums
- Discounts on services such as Car Insurance, car rentals and professional insurance

More information about membership can be found at:

<http://www.dec-sped.org/membershipbenefits.html>

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between “Mentally Handicapped”, “Mentally Impaired” and my personal favorite - “Mentally Retarded.” Yes, “Mentally Retarded.” Now I have had to be very careful how I explain to parents that their child must be labeled as “Mentally Retarded” in order to receive Special Education Services. By definition, there are no significant strengths or weakness that the child demonstrates in any area of functioning, and therefore there is nothing for me to highlight to the parents. I have refused to insult parents by telling them that their child’s educational strength is that they are “nice.” I have been very careful to stress to these parents that the biggest predictor of their child’s success is mastery motivation, and that given the right supports, their child *can* be successful. We may need to re-define “success” for these children, but they can be successful nonetheless. Often parents need time to digest the “mental retardation” label before they can hear any other information.

With the re-authorization of IDEA in 2007, the label has changed once again. We no longer label students as Mentally Retarded. We now say “Cognitively Delayed.” This label is a lot easier to chew, but I will wait until I have to present this to a parent before I pass final judgment. Even so, what a difference a year makes! Not only do we not have to break parents’ hearts twice: reporting the test scores and then using an insulting and degrading term/label; but the state of Illinois has now caught up to the Federal laws, and Early Childhood professionals are no longer *forced* to remove the “Developmental Delay” label from a child at age six, to replace it with “Mental Retardation”, “Cognitive Delay” or anything else for that matter. Of course as professionals we *must* call it as we see it if we are certain of our test results; however, if we need more time to rule out certain factors before committing to a serious label, then we now have until age nine to do so. The beginning of

the 2007-08 school year was an exciting one for me, as I was able to share this good news with the rest of our Early Childhood staff.

One day I hope that the State of Illinois will align itself with the State of Iowa, and we can eliminate labels altogether. Until that day comes, I can breathe easier with the parents who do not have to suffer the indignity of hearing that their child is “Mentally Retarded.”



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Preparing Relationship-based Early Intervention Personnel:

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Early Childhood/Infancy program in the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has been awarded federal funding to support students interested in attaining a **master's degree in early childhood special education, with an emphasis on working with infants/toddlers with disabilities and their families.** This is a 2 year program of study for full-time students; some students also work toward this degree on a part-time basis.

Completion of the master's program will provide the student with the core content requirements that are necessary to apply for Illinois' **Early Intervention Developmental Therapist** credential. Future employment opportunities for individuals holding this credential include

- early interventionist in a social service agency that serves infants/toddlers with disabilities
- self-employed service provider in early intervention
- child care provider or early interventionist in an integrated child care setting

Funding is limited and will be awarded on a competitive basis. This funding consists of a tuition waiver plus waiver of some fees, and a traineeship (10 hours/week; approximately \$666/month compensation). Interested individuals should apply to the graduate program in the Department of Special Education and explain in their goal statement why they are interested in working with infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. They should also indicate their interest in participating in the PREP Project.

Deadline for Fall 2008 admissions is April 1, 2008.

"Online Training Opportunities for Early Intervention Providers"

Online learning is not for everyone, but for many, online training and coursework gives the student/learner more flexibility and control over their time. Because time is such a valuable commodity to many in Illinois early intervention, the Training Program is now offering additional online training opportunities that can be credited towards your Early Intervention Credential. Providers interested in an Illinois

Early Intervention credentials now have the option of completing the required Systems Training in a three-day, 18 hour face-to-face training session **OR** in an online training course followed by a one-day, six hour Follow Up session. The Training Program has also added to its training menu five additional online trainings approved for EI credit among the four core content areas.

An alternative to the three day, 18 hour Systems Overview Training, required for all providers seeking an EI credential is the Online Systems Overview followed by a one day, face-to-face, follow up session. The Online Systems Overview consists of a short instructional module, 22 learning modules, each ranging 15 - 30 minutes in length and three test modules. Once registered and accepted into the online training, users may access as often and whenever desired. There is no end date for the completion of this training, allowing students to work at their own pace and according to their own schedules. However, to meet the Systems Training requirement for credentialing, providers choosing this training option must complete a one day, face-to-face follow up training session in addition to the completion of the online training. The one day follow up session is scheduled at various dates and sites around the state as needed and uses lecture, interactive group activities and discussion, and Power Point presentation to review information introduced in the online training and to present the latest information relative to current policies, procedures and best practices in Illinois early intervention.

Registration for the Online Systems Overview is only available online by logging on to the EI Training Program's website, www.illinoistraining.org, selecting the 'Upcoming EI Training' menu option and searching by category 'Online Systems Overview'. Follow the registration prompts. Once registration is completed an immediate e-mailed confirmation including the direct link to the training modules will be sent. Open the link and begin your online training. The 'Online Systems Overview' search category also includes the current schedule of Follow-Up Sessions. Online registration is available for these trainings as well, but be advised that proof of completion of the Online Systems Overview Training is required for admittance to the Follow-Up Session.

The first of five online trainings added to the Training Program's online menu provides 54 EI credit hours and is also available through the Training Program's website. 'Autism Spectrum Disorders', developed by the Illinois Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project and Illinois State University as ISU coursework, has been tailored by the Illinois EI Training Program to meet the needs of Illinois Early Intervention Professionals. This course includes information on the history of ASD, how we identify, the current prevalence of ASD and an overview of educational strategies based on areas of concern. Between each learning module is a gateway 'reality check' (quiz) that serves as an entry point into the next module. Users will be allowed two attempts to complete each quiz with a score of 80% or better to move on to the next module. Learning assignments are attached to some of the reality checks and must be completed and submitted to the Illinois EI Training Program before EI credit will be awarded. There is no end date currently associated with this online course and once registered, users may access as often as needed. To register, search the Training Program website's 'Upcoming EI Training' menu for Online Trainings.

Scroll down to the posted course and follow the instructions for registration.

The Illinois Association of Family Physicians has opened its online training to early intervention professionals and three of its learning modules have been approved for EI credit. 'Social and Emotional Development: Screening Strategies for Primary Care Providers' provides an overview of important tasks in the Social and Emotional Development of children ages birth - three. 'Identifying Autism Spectrum Disorders: Guidelines for Screening, Treatment & Referral' provides an overview of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), including autistic disorder and its milder variants including Asperger Syndrome and Pervasive Development Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS). And, 'Maternal Depression and Child Development: Strategies for Primary Care Physicians' provides an overview of Maternal Depression and its impact on child development. Each module offers two hours of EI credit. To register for these courses, search the EI Training Program's website calendar of events, as in the other online offerings, open the link to the registration form and follow the instructions for accessing the learning modules and obtaining EI credit.

The latest online training module added to the Training Program's menu is a link to the Illinois Department of Human Services, 'Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse: Training for Mandated Reporters'. You may access directly through the DCFS website at <http://www.dcfstraining.org/manrep/index.jsp> or <http://www.illinoistraining.org> online listings. A certificate of completion is offered at the end of this learning module. Print a copy for your records and to claim two hours of EI credentialing credit.

Conference Updates!

Illinois Action for Children

Spring into Action 2008

March 11-12

President Abraham Lincoln Hotel

Springfield, IL

For more information contact

Maya Tillman at 773-697-6137

Or tillman@actforchildren.org

**The Illinois Council for Exceptional
Children**

Spring Conference

April 11-12

Peoria, IL

For more information visit

<http://www.illinoiscec.org>

The Illinois Association for the

Education of Young Children

GROWING FUTURES

A Statewide 3-day Early Childhood

Conference

September 25-27, 2008

Hilton-Downtown, Springfield, IL

For more information visit:

<http://www.illinoisaeyc.org>

Division of Early Childhood

Renew Your Energy

**24th Annual International Confer-
ence on Young Children with Spe-
cial Needs and Their Families**

October 27-30, 2008

Minneapolis, Minnesota

For more information visit:

<http://www.dec-sped.org>