



Building Momentum and Taking A Stance:  
Massachusetts Early Educators  
Advancing the Field



**A Report About the 2012-2013  
Early Educators Fellowship Initiative**

**June 28, 2013**

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Valora Washington, PhD  
President, The CAYL Institute

# Participants' Reflections On The Early Educators Fellowship Initiative (EEFI)

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At The CAYL, Institute we ask Fellows to become “Architects of Change.” As architects, we advise them to **analyze** their circumstances, **advance** their cause, **act** with courage, and accelerate the course of change.

The CAYL Institute is especially grateful that so many exceptional people have shared their time, ideas and struggles with us. We have asked probing questions and literally disrupted the career trajectories of many early educators who have found new ways to address their frustrations, aspirations, triumphs and failures.

Throughout this report we frequently refer to their stories and approaches. We appreciate the honest and forthright experiences of these change-agents, especially when they took risks by speaking their truth. All participants were promised confidentiality in exchange for their frank reflections. Therefore, we intentionally do not identify them and use pseudonyms for all participants in this document, except Jeff Wolff.

The following are written comments provided to us by participants:

## **Analyze**

EEFI Fellows are supported as they analyze and reflect upon the everyday realities they face in their local communities and in our state. They are encouraged to be realistic about what needs to be done as well as what can be done; to adjust their work and practices accordingly; and to use their acquired new knowledge about the science of early learning and child development. Here is a sample of Fellows reflections about their experiences:

*“We know so much more about what children need, what we should be able to provide for them. We have a field that’s willing to do so much of the work, but we don’t have the resources, primarily the financial resources to do what needs to happen. We know how important early education is although we early educators already knew that but now there are resources to actually back that up. I think it’s too bad that our early educators are carrying this amazing responsibility yet they are for the most part working poor, It does a disservice to the workers, to the families and to the children. I think people who should be excited about doing this work and are excited about doing this work are leaving the field because they cannot afford their lives and they are penalized for staying in the field because they cannot afford to support their own family.”*

*“We face a multitude of issues.... lack of funding, lack of respect of the field of early education. As a nation we value our children so much, yet we do not provide access to quality education for them all.”*

*“It’s a challenging job that pays so little. I teach early childhood educators and I know that living on a wage from a childcare center is nearly impossible.”*

*“As the head of a childcare facility, I find it difficult to retain workers. You get them the credentials that they need and in a year or two you have to replace them because of new credentials and certifications.”*

*“It’s a vicious circle. There’s a revolving door of staff and quality staff that we cannot afford to keep without raising tuition and losing students to cheaper schools.”*

## **Advance**

EEFI Fellows are asked to commit to and accept responsibility for strategic engagement actions and collaboration with others in ways that unify and advance the field and strengthen our collective voice. Fellows are encouraged to articulate a vision and to prepare and implement a plan for actualizing that vision; to understand the importance of affiliating with others and assuming a shared identity to help direct the changes they envision; and to recognize the value of aligning what they know with what they do in order to advance their cause.

*“One of the major accomplishments was to establish relationships in our community that will benefit us all. We are working to gain the respect of the community as educational leaders and are showcasing the importance and significance of all we do.”*

*“The diversity of the members of our group and the Fellowship in general allowed me to have access to differing facets of our profession. We are forming connections between all of the components needed to give every child a real chance at success, to build a foundation that will blossom academically, physically, socially and emotionally.”*

*“The most significant positive aspect of the Fellowship was the realization that you are not alone-- your issues are shared by many! It was so gratifying to learn how eager people were to support you and eager to remain connected. I really appreciated being a part of a group that was so diverse and open.”*

*“I am definitely creating allies from many organizations in my community. The Head Start Family Childcare homes are going to implement collaborative parent meetings starting this fall. With advocacy information from MADCA and Early Education for All and their supporters, the House was able to come up with a budget that includes \$477 million for the Department of Early Education and Care. Amendments were adopted to restore \$5 million to the department's budget that would ensure level-funding for UPK, Head Start, and Services for Infants and Parents (Coordinated Family and Community Engagement grants). MADCA members worked hard to advocate for the \$7.5 million rate reserve for early education and care providers which got support from the House.”*

*“Because of my experience as part of the Fellowship I feel confident in reaching out to Norwell Public Schools’ and South Shore Head Start for collaboration and support to work together with a shared identity. CAYL created a welcomed and needed climate that promotes future growth in our mission to take responsibility for the benefit of children!”*

*“Early educators teach because they love children first, over the love of teaching. One of the differences is love. We prepare them for school by teaching them life skills.”*

*“What keeps me going everyday is knowing that I am teaching these girls how to be good early childhood educators, good role models and how to be conscious of their decisions. It’s not always an easy task because of the different places and home cultures they come from, but I’m proud of them.”*

*“I think we are doing a better job than we used to. We are thought less as babysitters now, but I think we still have a ways to go. Maybe it’s a humorous approach, but if we could have a reality TV show and people could watch children learning maybe that would accomplish something for the public’s understanding!”*

*“We as early educators are not good at delivering our own message and that is something we really need to be focusing on. How do we empower early educators to say what we do is really important?”*

## Act

EEFI Fellows are asked to underscore their commitment to young children and the profession through intentional and confidently displayed personal and collective acts of courage; They do “The Right Thing” and display courageous acts of personal commitment, competence, and character in the midst of and in spite of criticism and efforts to intimidate, negate, and isolate them. They defy the “odds” in both small and large ways through acts, which improve outcomes for young children. Here are some Fellows' reflections:

*“The training presented to 50 South Shore YMCA Early Ed staff was a much more valuable training due to what I learned at CAYL...we have implemented many of the approaches and are committed to anti-bias education & providing anti-bias environments in our EEC programs at the Y. Family engagement has always been a critical component to our programs. Also mentioned most recently we attended the Strengthening Families training and have adopted the 5 protective factors of: Parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting & child development, concrete support, social/emotional competence of children. However Dr. Mapp gave me a new way of looking at family engagement & ideas to promote well being for those families we serve. It’s critical to our Y mission to stay connected and build / strengthen positive relationships with families (& see positive outcomes for children). We offer so many ways for families to engage in our Early Learning programs...tons of time & effort is involved but the results are worth its weight in gold! Our program serves many different cultures and families, which also includes our program staff. As we have become more knowledgeable about the various aspects that have been discussed we have started*

*revisiting how we do, say, and ask questions and approach staff, parents and children as a whole. My approach with families has been affected by the CAYL coursework including meetings and our South Shore team conference call discussions.”*

*“As a team, we continued our action plan discussion for developing a vision statement for early learning in our district to also include standards based learning, the role of development and learning centers. This discussion also revealed the need for further supports across all classrooms in professional development and student and professional resources. As a district we have begun to acquire some of the resources needed, made the first in what we hope will be many professional development videos focusing on an effective early learning activity, and continue the discussion of further professional development opportunities needed.”*

*“We have decided to partner to address our transportation and group admission issues as it relates to field trips and expanded learning opportunities as we start the summer season. Working together we can expand the learning opportunities for all of our children. We are also looking to address the biases and bigotry that still plague our children in the school system and the communities.”*

## **Acceleration**

EEFI Fellows are encouraged to scrutinize and take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way and use it to accelerate their efforts to create positive change for both the field and for the children and families we serve. Fellows attach urgency to their efforts and keep it moving. “Never let up” is their operating motto. They find and affiliate with confidential communities, which help sustain and encourage them while on their journey, and enhance their sense of belonging to something important. They document and communicate their successes with each other and the community at large and seek opportunities to “spread the word.” Here are some reflections from Fellows:

*“We have established a kindergarten subcommittee and Principal leadership group for early education. From the discussions and needs of this group along with the timely presentation of Debbie LeeKeenan we are embarking on the process of crafting an Early Learning vision. Moving forward we will continue to build the common language and understanding through reading and further research. We are also expanding the stakeholders that are part of the group creating the vision to include parents, upper administration, community liaison, and PreK representatives. As part of our summer leadership we are hoping to invite Dr. Karen Mapp to share her work on family engagement and kick off our Early Learning vision.”*

*“As a result of the Fellowship, district stakeholders including Early Childhood Directors, ELL support specialist, Language and Literacy Coordinator, Principal and Assistant Principal embarked on a discussion of early learning in our district. Many voices were at the table. We were able to take this discussion and our learning and bring the information back to a larger group of stakeholders including teachers, literacy specialists and upper administration. This is a stance that is new, at least within the past 10 years, to our district.”*

*“I networked with 3 people and now have constant contact with them. One person, we are actually sharing our waitlist with each other to help meet our enrollment goals. I had great conversations with many people regarding what we are doing and even gave each other reassurance and suggestions.”*

*“As a result of our participation, we were able to create a community-wide family event where we were able to give parents experiential activities to do with their children, speak of healthy nutrition, discuss child development and inform them of some community resources. We disseminated all of that information all while having fun “playing,” watching puppet shows, exploring a fire truck and race car, experiencing the New England Aquarium tide pool, and getting involved in a STEM magic show! Our local grocer donated a healthy snack of bananas and bottled water. All area early childhood centers participated. We had a few family childcare providers, a kindergarten teacher and the Ayer Public School program donated the space.”*

*“My team was comprised of professionals serving young children in difference capacities within the same community. We each brought something unique to the table, which made our partnership a rich and educational experience. Working together we came up with how we will use the knowledge shared at the seminars to best serve our community. I think we all learned something valuable from each of the different guest speakers and will now be better prepared to promote non-biased environments rich with a sense of the importance of family engagement that will optimize all students' success with reaching the standards.”*

## **The Impact of CAYL**

In their evaluations, EEFI Fellows often speak highly of the impact of The CAYL Institute on their work:

*“The structure of the CAYL Fellowship was just the right thing for anyone who's in the field of education. We got up-to-date information. We were able to sit in the regularly scheduled location meeting time with a patient facilitator and talk about what was close to our hearts. You know, I don't believe that anybody goes into the field of education to get rich. They are going there to do a really good job so we got to talk about the work. We got to say what we truly thought and not feel uncomfortable about it or that there may be negative repercussions. We are all somewhere on the learning curve around every piece of this learning (about early childhood). So some new parts of it are better than others and we were able to share that knowledge and experience without having to put up shields and without having to consider our words really carefully because they may come back and haunt us...it was an authentic experience... It is really about taking the journey with people who are having the same experiences and really talking and finding solutions in each other. And, you know, when they talk about collegiality, this is it.”*



*“I found participating in this Fellowship to be educational and inspiring. As I return to the classroom after 9 years of running my family childcare business I feel like I have a renewed sense of what makes for excellent teaching. I look forward to applying what was shared during the different seminars and I feel better prepared because of my participation in this experience.”*

*“I am truly appreciative of the opportunity to attend the CAYL Institute. Thank you very much for selecting me to be a part of this wonderful program. I hope this will continue to grow and we can make a significant difference in the lives of children and families through a collaborative leadership model.”*

*“Thank you for a rewarding and inspiring experience. It was my first Fellowship, and I feel that future Fellowships would be even more inspiring toward action.”*

*“The CAYL experience was more than I could have hoped for. The new relationships formed in this confidential and committed community are invaluable to me. Thank you so much for including me in this rewarding professional experience. One of the most important [things I learned] and something I will never forget is this: ‘The gap between vision and reality is the place where you lead...bring reality up to your vision’ ...I promise you I will!”*

*“I would love to share that with each year I gain more experience, competence and confidence and I am so grateful of the opportunity. I was once asked where I found my “voice” in early childhood. I am still gaining it and this experience helps to make it stronger. Valora and all of the CAYL team are so welcoming, approachable and helpful. It has been an honor to work with you! I am hoping to have this opportunity again next year. I am determined to get our local school Principal on our team and have already been approached by a family childcare provider who hopes to join us if it is available next year.”*

*“I feel extremely privileged to be part of such an important group. The experiences and learning was enormous and I hope to use all that was shared on the 4 wonderful Saturdays to help my community to take ACTION.*

*I am an Architect of Change*

*I am an Early Educator*

*I take Action*

*I ask Important Questions.”*

*“Thank you for this incredible opportunity to network with other educators and to learn from the knowledgeable and powerful speakers that attended. As a family childcare provider I often feel like I am on the edge of the educational system. While not treated as a “babysitter,” there are times when the public does not realize all that we do when we work with their children and may trivialize all that we do. Thank you for including all the educators working with children.”*



*“I am grateful that I had the opportunity to participate in the CAYL Fellowship. I looked forward to the Saturday meetings and enjoyed the reading assignments. I especially liked getting to meet so many people from other sectors. I hope there will be more opportunities for us to re-connect as Fellows. Thank you for the careful planning and the excellent speakers you had present. Valora Washington’s enthusiasm is contagious! Thank you!”*

*“Thank you again for a memorable experience...it is a professional journey that will continue in our South Shore community. To the betterment of children and families!”*

*“Thank you again for a very informative and inspiring Fellowship. We are excited to use the insights we gained to help move our vision and initiatives forward.”*

*“I can’t wait for next year to be a part of the program. It is so energizing and we need to bottle Valora’s passion and energy. Why not have some politicians, foundations, philanthropists hear our stories and the work we do?”*

*“Although we still have a lot of work to do to meet our goals, the point is the process has been started thanks to CAYL. We continue to have rich conversations and use each other as resources and experts in the field.”*

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# Acknowledgements

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We are most grateful to the 360 early educators in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who have participated in the Early Educators Fellowship Initiative since 2010. These Massachusetts leaders have formed 51 community teams and, for the most part, worked diligently and constructively to advance early care and learning opportunities for children and their families.

In addition to these extraordinary early educators, we wish to thank the national leaders who joined with us to provide innovative thinking and guidance as we worked to advance the field in our state. In 2013 these national leaders were Debbie LeeKeenan, Dr. Karen Mapp, Dr. Jacqueline Jones, and Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan.

We are also especially grateful to the CAYL staff and consultants who produced the Fellowship series and provided support to the Fellows:

Kate Amel—CAYL’s Associate Manager of Programs and Operations

Brenda Gadson—Founder and principle of BMG Consulting and management consultant for CAYL since 2008

Finally, we extend our thanks to the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. The previous Commissioner, Sherri Killins, provided visionary leadership and a commitment to engagement of early educators from the “grassroots” to the “grass tops.” Many Massachusetts EEC staff have been deeply committed to and supportive of this effort--Thank you!

## *Why is there a Fellowship for early educators?*

Early care and education has evolved from a relatively invisible enterprise to a field on the cusp of being recognized as providing a public good for all children. The early years are now understood as being learning years that can change the life trajectories of children and families while fueling a state's economic growth.

An explosion of research in neuroscience and other developmental sciences shows us that the basic architecture of a child's brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues through adulthood. Like the construction of a home, the building process begins with laying the foundation, framing the rooms and wiring the electrical system in a predictable sequence. Early experiences literally shape how the brain gets built. A strong foundation in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes. A weak one will require remedial education, clinical treatment or other interventions that are less effective and more costly than providing crucial brain building interactions early in life.

The interactive influences of a child's genes and a child's experiences shape brain development. The active ingredient is the "serve and return" relationships with the adult caregivers in the family, community and care and education program. Like the process of serve and return in games such as tennis and volleyball, young children naturally reach out for interaction. These activities actually "wire" the brain by creating connections. Healthy brain building is fostered when adults respond and the interaction goes back and forth, much like a game of tennis.

Chronic stressful conditions such as extreme poverty, abuse or severe maternal depression--what scientists now call "toxic stress" -- disrupt the architecture of the developing brain. This can lead to lifelong difficulties in learning, memory and self-regulation. The neurological response to toxic stress never goes away, with costly consequences for both children and society. When you understand the sequence and process by which brains are built, it's easy to understand why it's wiser to start every child out strong. Trying to change behavior or build new skills on a weak foundation requires greater effort and is less effective than providing brain building interactions and environments early in life.

In order to effectively support children's brain development, there needs to be a seamless system of child development across early learning and elementary education. With regard to this, there exists concern within the field about three key issues: 1) alignment between public schools and other community based or private programs that serve children, 2) the varied and fragmented sectors (various sectors Head Start, family childcare, public schools) and 3) meeting the needs and serving the "whole" child. The challenge is to create a shared platform in the early care and education field to take collective responsibility for building a 21<sup>st</sup> century educational system that includes all children beginning with our youngest citizens.

To improve developmental outcomes for all children, early learning must be strengthened in whatever setting it occurs including elementary schools, childcare centers, and family childcare. In Massachusetts we are working to:

- Strengthen the alignment of standards and assessment for children from birth through Grade 3;
- Provide professional development opportunities to Principals and administrators who are leading programs in schools or community settings with children birth to age 8;
- Develop additional *whole community systems*, designed and devoted to the education of all children birth to age 8; *and*
- Support the field in collaborating and developing unified policy and program strategies to benefit all children.

Leaders must continue to develop their skills and knowledge base with respect to vision, pedagogy and practice, supervision, family and community, and policy perspectives relative to the education of young learners. Critical to building a system of early care and education is aligned strategy and planning from the prenatal period through age 8, which address the following areas<sup>1</sup>:

- Mechanisms for cross-sector alignment (*Governance; strategic plans*)
- Administrators and Leadership Quality (*Leadership is inclusive/facilitative and focused on instruction*)
- Teacher Quality and Capacity (*Focus on credentials and professional development; professional dispositions; professional community*)
- Instructional Tools and Practices (*Curriculum content; alignment of standards and curricula; pedagogical methods*)
- Instructional Environment (*Student-centered learning culture (classroom and school)*)
- Data and Assessments (*Data and assessment used to improve instruction*)
- Engaged Families (*Families and communities engaged in student learning*)
- Transitions and Pathways (*Focus on children's movement through the continuum*)

## *The Early Educators Fellowship Initiative*

With these ideas in mind, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) as lead agent and in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE), hired The CAYL Institute to envision and coordinate an Early Educators Fellowship Institute (EEFI) series for elementary school Principals and directors or similar leaders from community-based providers in the mixed-delivery system of early care and education (e.g., family childcare, Head Start, early intervention, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement networks, group childcare programs, etc.) CAYL and EEC first launched the EEFI in the 2010-2011 academic year, and offered it a second time during the 2011-2012 academic year.

This report is based on the third year of the Early Educators Fellowship Initiative (EEFI), which ran from 2012-2013. In year three, EEFI consisted of four in-depth professional development meetings for a cohort of select Principals, community-based directors, and other similar leaders in the field (“Fellows”). In the 2012-2013 EEFI, the topics were as follows:

1. Building Anti-bias Education Programs: The Leader’s Role with Debbie LeeKeenan
2. The Role of Family Engagement from Birth to Age Eight in Promoting School Success with Karen Mapp
3. Individual Development for Early Educators: Taking Early Learning Standards From Theory to Change to Practice with Sharon Lynn Kagan
4. Using Assessment to Individualize Teaching with Jacqueline Jones

Each meeting provided eight hours of instruction in a daylong meeting format. In addition, Fellows were requested to meet in their community teams at least once in-between meetings. The EEFI targeted leaders throughout Massachusetts, prioritizing Principals and staff of Level 3 and 4 Elementary Schools<sup>ii</sup>, and also included proportionate numbers of representatives from Head Start, family childcare, center-based care and other programs. As a statewide initiative, this Institute builds a learning community and a sense of shared purpose, identity and responsibility.<sup>iii</sup>

## ***Building momentum and taking a stance***

In Massachusetts, the statewide team approach is advancing the field of early care and education by building momentum as early educators take a stance in their own communities to make a difference for children and families. We ask early educators to be “Architects of Change.”<sup>iv</sup>

Following our three years of efforts we have found that early educators’ work follows a general pathway—we call this pathway becoming an “Architect of Change.” Fellows build momentum and take a stance when they analyze their situations, advance their knowledge, act with courage, and accelerate their impact.

- Architects of Change **analyze** the realities they face and understand the world as it is, not as they wish it to be. Analysis requires us to be reflective, to be knowledgeable of the science of early learning and child development, and to acknowledge the imbalance of power and the places that hurt.
- Architects of Change **advance** our cause by accepting responsibility for strategic engagement. Knowing exactly what we are doing and keeping the vision front and center, binds us together as a significant force on the move.
- Architects of Change **act** with courage and confidence. Our commitment to young children and our profession makes us persistent and steadfast in our work together. Our strength of character makes us resistant when we must be so.
- Architects of Change **accelerate** the efforts to create progress at every opportunity. We stick together, use the circumstances in front of us, and focus on the change at hand that can make a positive difference in the lives of young children and the people who work with and care for them. This gives us traction and we keep it moving. We know that for young children and early educators in our state, there is no end to the supply of opportunities to make progress and create change.



## *Overview of this document*

This document presents:

- Information about the “Architects of Change” pathway: analyze, advance, act and accelerate.
- Samples of the work of early educators in Massachusetts as they build momentum and take a stance to advance the field and improve the lives of young children.

We hope that you find this sampling of stories useful as you consider ways in which you can work for your children and for our profession.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valora Washington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Valora Washington, PhD  
President  
The CAYL Institute





*Part I*  
ANALYZE  
We Must First *Think and Reflect*

---

*“There is nothing to fear except the persistent refusal to find out the truth,  
the persistent refusal to analyze the causes of happenings.”  
-Dorothy Thompson*

In the Early Educators Fellowship Initiative, we first encourage Fellows to *think and reflect* on the information that they are learning and sharing. Analysis, we believe, consists of both facing reality and deepening our knowledge base.

## ***Reality: Face it!***

We realize that we face persistent and dominant realities that encumber our children, our field, our nation, and our state. Being willing to face reality is an ancient wisdom that has been carried forward as a key leadership principle of the modern world. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, used the following mantra as a central part of his leadership philosophy, “*Face reality as it is, not as it was or as you wish it were.*” You cannot change what you do not face.



Given this wisdom, it is imperative that we look dispassionately at the status of young children in the state of Massachusetts and the role of early educators as it relates to their status. Our look at current realities for young children is a matter for deep thinking and reflection among us, and cannot be quickly brushed over or approached too casually.

In Massachusetts today, as in other parts of the world, we find that there are basic changes in the very nature of childhood itself. The nature of play, along with wider exposure to media and changes in parenting, have all influenced common understanding of what it means to be a child. “For a new generation, nature is more abstraction than reality. Increasingly, nature is something to watch, to consume, to wear—to ignore.”<sup>v</sup>

There is substantial evidence that opportunity and achievement gaps emerge early in life, certainly before age two. The early onset of disparities becomes public at school entry. While the nation intensifies its focus on school readiness, more than one third of our nation’s children are considered “not ready” for kindergarten. All of these issues highlight the critical role of the early educator’s efforts to alleviate educational disadvantages as early as possible.



As we think, reflect and analyze the circumstances for young children and for early educators in Massachusetts, we see persistent realities that must be faced as the first step toward change. Accept reality. Take a cold, hard look at what is. Don't run away from the truth. The work of early educators matters enormously as familial, academic, and emotional support systems. As illustrated by former elementary school Principal Jeff Wolff, even when the environment for young children seems stable and effective, there may be unexamined opportunities for growth.

As we listen to the voices of CAYL Fellows, we realize that facing reality can be difficult. Sometimes reality seems overwhelming. You can feed a hungry child, yet dozens more remain hungry. You reach out to a newcomer from another land, and administrative hurdles make it difficult to get them the help they need. What can you possibly hope to achieve? Changing realities cannot be assumed as an inevitable consequence of either time, or a better economy or changing demography. Facing reality is the beginning of the journey – and we acknowledge that analysis can be a painful beginning as you examine your own community policies and practices, or the level of collaboration among educators from different sectors in your town.

### ***Respect our knowledge: We know more than we do!***

*“We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men; and among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects.”*  
- Herman Melville

The CAYL Institute strongly encourages Fellows to deepen their knowledge base about the field of early care and education. Further, we ask Fellows to reflect on the alignment between our programs and our knowledge base. Then, each Fellow is asked to identify areas for further learning.

We clearly remember President Barack Obama’s “State of the Union” address in February 2013. He stated:

Study after study shows that the sooner a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. But today, fewer than three in ten 4-year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality preschool program. We know this works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. Let's give our kids that chance.

Indeed! Facing realities of our field must be grounded in what we “know.” And, there is considerable evidence that, as early educators we have significant knowledge about both what to do for the success of all young children and how to do it. One example is found in the Boston, Massachusetts Public Schools (BPS). BPS used several strategies including modifying literacy and math curricula; direct in-classroom coaching over 3 years; consistent and targeted professional development; NAEYC Accreditation Self-Study and Assessment process; CAYL professional early childhood Fellowship for elementary school Principals; and literacy assessments for PreK following through to second grade. All together, the data from the study showed that providing high-quality early childhood education is entirely doable in a large public school district and in a relatively short period of time (2 years). Mixed income classrooms may play a significant role in lifting all children’s vocabulary scores.<sup>vi</sup>

Nevertheless, as we reflect on the alignment between our programs and our knowledge base, we often discover huge gaps. Too often, young learners face inadequate access, unaffordability, low quality and poor alignment in their early education program. For the early educator there exists a fragile workforce that is not effectively organized to speak for either itself or for the children and families it serves.

As a profession, we know more than we actually do. Therefore, there is a sense of both celebration and uneasiness in the field today.

## ***Fellows analyze***

*“You are a product of your environment. So choose the environment that will best develop you toward your objective. Analyze your life in terms of its environment. Are the things around you helping you toward success - or are they holding you back?”*  
-W. Clement Stone

Fellows analyze and reflect upon the realities faced locally and globally and recognize the “world” is not the way they wish it to be. They are realistic about what needs to be done as well as what can be done and adjust their work and practices accordingly, utilizing their knowledge of the science of early learning and child development. Here we offer reflections from Jeff Wolfe, the higher education team of participants and a team from the Cape Cod-Southeast area.

### *Jeff Wolff*

Jeff Wolff knows that early educators must endure and persist in making positive change for children and families. He was an elementary school Principal in Millis, Massachusetts, and toward the end of his tenure, he began the quest to increase his knowledge of how young children learn. An integrated preschool was developed in his school and he was learning about NAEYC accreditation from the teachers. He participated in the first CAYL Principals’ Fellowship and Early Educators Fellowship Initiative and visited multiple early childhood programs across Massachusetts. This new dimension to education interested Jeff. He began to deepen his engagement within the Millis community and networked with the local childcare providers, becoming part of their Community Partnerships for Children. One thing led to another and next, Jeff had engaged the Superintendent’s attention. He advocated for NAEYC accreditation standards and increasing early childhood programming in the community. He networked with the police and fire departments, teachers, and parent organizations to bring a childcare program to school grounds. This program serves all of the employees in the town’s departments and also some of the families in the community. Success!



Today Jeff has retired from his career as a Principal and yet the early childhood programs endure. Following his retirement, he served a brief stint as Executive Director of the Massachusetts Head Start Association. Jeff is building new connections and networking across the state to increase quality for young children. He is looking for innovative linkages with higher education to help early educator/students to develop professionally and complete bachelor’s degree programs.



## Higher Education Team

The Higher Education Team was composed of educators and administrators representing public and private two and four year institutions of higher education, educational readiness centers, and policy setting organizations. Individually and collectively they have expressed broad based concern for the early childhood education field and its future while recognizing the important role that they as well as their peers and students could play in shaping and improving that future. Their experiences as professors and administrators of early education teacher preparation programs provide the context behind their thinking and analysis of the dominant realities facing the field, as well as their thoughts regarding potential solutions. The team observed that:

- In terms of licensure, elementary education is a dominant theme;
- Early childhood educators' professional development and degree granting options are scarce;
- A smaller number of two year students are advancing to four year degrees;
- Early childhood dialogue is almost exclusively preschool centered;
- Conversation about infant and toddler care and development is muted;
- There is a fundamental misunderstanding among educators and administrators regarding teachers' role in early childhood education and how learning experiences for young children should be provided (not elementary pushdown);
- There is a heavy preponderance on the academic side of child development and bias against a whole-child developmental approach, which is seen as less rigorous;
- There is a need for more conversation and training around quality early pedagogy – what it looks like and how its' implemented in the classroom;
- There is a need to eliminate the divisions between two and four year colleges around degree granting options and reciprocity and between public and private preschool sectors relative to educators' early childhood preparation; *and*
- The level of respect for private sector preschool teachers needs to be increased; training, preparation and skills need to be elevated.

While the individual team members had known of and in some instances worked with each other in the past, the Fellowship represented one of the few times they had been able to cohere in an intentional and purposeful manner to discuss issues and concerns so near and dear to each of them. One of the participants remarked:

This Fellowship allowed the group to talk in a way that has never happened before. The ability to build a strong understanding and appreciation between the two and four year public institutions has been extraordinary. We now have in place a team that will continue to work to build friends and bring a strong message to others about needed changes in teacher preparation, this would have never happened without the CAYL Fellowship.



Their work as a team was solidified during the Fellowship experience and as a result they were able to vision and articulate a plan for an enhanced teacher preparation system inclusive of the following goals:

- Develop a plan of action to strengthen early childhood programs in public institutions of higher education;
- Inspire institutions of higher education and Readiness Centers to be responsive to the unmet needs of the early childhood workforce; *and*
- Plan a meeting of institutions of higher education and Readiness Centers to present possibilities for removal of barriers to degree attainment.

### ***Southeast and Cape Cod Team***

A team from the Southeast/Cape Cod area was comprised of Center Directors, Early Education Coordinators, Principals and lead teachers working with pre-school aged children in both public and private settings. They became involved with the Fellowship to increase their knowledge about Massachusetts' Core Standards and explore new methods of advocating for Early Childhood Education services that support their children. They represent a community with a high immigrant population with diverse cultural and language (i.e. Nepalese, Haitian Creole, Spanish) backgrounds. One team members' school has been designated as a "gateway city" by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as 95% of the children in the school are eligible for reduced lunch, 50% of the families are non- English speaking, and 35%-50% of the children are second language learners. Team members and their school systems have identified and are struggling to address on a daily basis many realities, which include, at a minimum, the following:

- Children suffering effects of stress and trauma exhibiting behavior problems;
- Children living in unsafe, challenging living environments;
- School systems' limited ability to engage and communicate (lack of interpreters) with parents;
- An overdependence on educational systems to address social, health and other family needs;
- A lack of resources to support academic needs of students and/or provide access or entry into pre-school settings for all children in need; *and*
- A lack of community services to address the number and complexity of problems facing the families (i.e. mental health, substance abuse, domestic violence, housing, employment, disparities with respect to language, culture, and race, etc.).

As educators they recognize the limitations of what they can do but yet team members have been extremely resourceful and creative with respect to meeting the educational needs of their children. They have taken steps to ensure that children see their schools as safe places and relatively stress free environments. They have adopted successful strategies for communicating with their non English speaking students by utilizing such tools as sign language, pictures, board making, acting, modeling, pre-reading ready books, etc. They have been able to engage translation services for some of their families as well as coordinate the delivery or access to necessary social and health services. They have also petitioned their programs and schools to hire more teachers with second language speaking capabilities. In some instances home visits were initiated and family social workers made available to help and support their families. They have coordinated service delivery across communities and in some instances shared resources wherever the situation allowed.



The Fellowship program provided the team with concrete information that was of immediate benefit and could be integrated into their programs and planning.



# PART II ADVANCE We Must Plan and Prepare

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*“As we advance in life it becomes more and more difficult, but in fighting the difficulties the inmost strength of the heart is developed.”  
-Vincent Van Gogh*

In the Early Educators Fellowship Initiative, we also encourage Fellows to plan and prepare. Advancing requires that we articulate a vision, assume a shared identity and actively align what we know with what we do.

## Articulate a vision



A vision declares and defines our destiny, intentions and expectations. It is our vision that enables us to see the difference between what is and what could be. It is the source of our planning and preparation. The work *begins* with a strong vision that moves us to change the reality that we face. We must clearly articulate our vision-- and we must do so before any of the circumstances have changed! A vision defines the results we anticipate.

What are our intentions as early educators? What results do we anticipate? What consensus will we mold? What is the reality that we confidently create? And move toward? What is our *destiny*?

Change is not an option. Our field is in a period of important and significant transition. Do you see it? Are you ready for it? How are we as a profession going to look as a field in five short years from now? We see the dramatic changes that are barreling toward us. These changes will impact our work and our children for years to come. Will you simply try to survive the change? Or, will you work with others to thrive with a vision that creates a new reality and changes the rules of the game? How can we rise to the occasion and be leaders and Architects of Change? Vision, we believe, begins when we declare our intentions and find ways for our individual and sector intentions to cohere.

Many early educators begin their journey in the field because we care deeply about young children; we are drawn into the wonder of seeing the world through a child's eyes; we are delighted and engaged in the company of children; and we feel an inner calling to serve. Ask yourself:

- What moved me to become an early educator in the first place?
- What still calls out to my heart and my mind?
- What brings me moments of joy in my daily work?
- What motivates me to stay in the early care and education field?



## *Assume a shared identity*

To achieve success, we must affiliate, belong, and connect with each other. We are *all* early educators. We identify as such and unify our efforts to be a force that can lead and direct the changes we need. We gain power when we work together as one distinct field of professionals.

At the CAYL Institute we emphasize the fact that “us” and “them” are ALL early educators. We advocate that being an early educator is our shared identity whether we work in a school, a childcare center, Head Start, in family childcare or another type of program. Yet because of differences in history, funding, professional preparation, our attitudes and all the other factors, there is all too often a great deal of suspicion, tension, non-communication, and miscommunication among early educators in different settings. This is not a best practice in the interest of children. Yet the challenge of unity persists. If we are to effect change for children and ourselves, a vision of shared identity is essential.

In other professions, we see that people typically identify with something that is bigger than just one person or sector. An attorney identifies with the legal profession as a whole whether employed in its corporate or public defender sectors. A physician identifies as a doctor whether a pediatrician or general practitioner.

In our view, an early educator ought to identify as an early educator whether a public school teacher or a family childcare provider! Our sense of a shared identity is important in two additional ways: it can help us to counter the isolation, silos and sense of low prestige that many of us experience. We have to learn to lead together, not simply advocate for our own branch of the tree, if we wish to be architects of change. Also, consolidating our identity as early educators means looking closely at the attributes that make us who we are-- our field’s distinctive competencies, contributions and capabilities. These are the attributes that distinguish us from a good babysitter or loving grandmother.

## *Align knowing and doing*

Our commitment to young children helps build our competence as early educators. We are highly informed in the science of early learning and child development. When our practice is in sync with our core knowledge base we strengthen our professional character and we are fully prepared to advance our cause. EEFI presents a forum where we can examine our practice and align it with the latest research and best practices.

As early educators we are more likely to succeed when we use and build from the unique skills we already have and when we can align knowing with doing. We cannot be change-adverse. In addition, we must be willing to speak up and build from the knowledge and skill that is familiar and already tested. Several qualities support us as we close the gap between what we know and what we do: *personal commitment, competence, character, and courage.*

## *Fellows advance*

Fellows commit to and accept responsibility for strategic engagement actions and activities with others that unify and advance the field and strengthen its collective voice. They understand the need to articulate a vision and to prepare and implement a plan for actualizing that vision; they understand the importance of affiliating with others and assuming a shared identity to help direct the changes they envision; and they recognize the value of aligning what they know with what they do in order to advance their cause.

### *Northeastern Massachusetts Team*



A team from northeastern Massachusetts was comprised of educators and administrators representing a variety of roles (Early Childhood Directors, ELL support specialist, Language and Literacy Coordinator, Principal and Assistant Principal). With enthusiasm and intentionality they entered the Fellowship eager to learn and committed to the idea of acquiring additional skills and knowledge which would be helpful in advancing their systems' strategic plan and educational agenda. They came from a system, which is actively engaged in a visionary, community driven, collaborative and strategic educational planning process focused on improving its K-8 educational program. The Fellowship experience offered team members a unique opportunity to develop an action plan (i.e. developing a vision statement for early learning in their district), which could help strengthen and accelerate actualization of their systems' vision. As a team, they were able to expand discussion of their current needs and devise strategies for implementation of the districts' strategic plan objectives and benchmarks. In addition the Fellowship helped them generate thinking around how best to address those needs; meet and/or refine outcomes; develop the action plan; and, initiate next steps for the future.

The Fellowship was successful in helping them reach both their individual and shared system goals as well as building and strengthening their capacity as a team and as “Architects of Change.” One participant observed:

Through the instruction of the keynote speakers we are beginning to develop a shared language and shared understanding of the current state of our district in terms of a vision, anti-bias programming, family involvement and assessment and possible next steps to strengthen those areas. As middle management, our challenge is to bring our upper level management on board with the same language and understanding to move a vision forward.



The team is well on the way to advancing their work and reaching their goals. The Fellowship experience helped solidify their thinking about how to better define and communicate the role of early childhood programming in their district; how to recognize and plan for resolving challenges; and how to augment their thinking about the development of existing and future programs and services to be offered in their system. Examples include:

- Establishment of a kindergarten subcommittee and early education Principals' leadership group tasked with crafting an early learning vision statement and plan;
- Expansion of the stakeholders that are part of the group to include parents, upper administration, community liaison, and pre- K representatives;
- Invitation to Dr. Karen Mapp to their summer leadership program series;
- Strengthened professional development opportunities and provision of new resources (i.e. publications, videos, presenters, etc.) to staff throughout the upcoming school year;
- Creation of their first professional development video focusing on effective early learning activity;
- Integration of Dr. Jones's "Documentation Assessment Five-Stage Cycle" and her views on using assessments to individualize teaching into the early learning district vision; *and*
- Dissemination of learning and critical information with a larger group of stakeholders in their system including teachers, literacy specialists and upper administration.

### ***Public School Preschool Teacher in Western Massachusetts***

Jenny is pre-school teacher working in a public school setting. She was a member of a team from western Massachusetts. Her hopes for the Fellowship were to form a stronger collaborations with her colleagues, to be inspired to become more proactive in her chosen field, to learn ways to better align pre-school education with the primary grades without losing the essence of a developmentally appropriate pre-school program, and to learn more about what is happening in the field. Her overall goal was to gather information and knowledge that could assist her efforts to strengthen early education programming within her program and community.

She and her team were able to develop and implement an action plan, which provided immediate benefits as well as longer term implications for improvement and success. A specific example is related to the area of assessment. Dr. Jones' presentation was extremely helpful in organizing and focusing the team's thoughts around assessment, as it is an area they had struggled with for some time. Jenny notes that in the eight-year period she had been with the district, a different assessment tool had been introduced almost yearly as a result of either state or grant directed initiatives. Included in that lineup were the Early Learning Accomplishment Profile – Diagnostic, Creative Curriculum, the HELP, the Battelle Developmental Inventory, CLASS, ECERS and currently a second attempt at Creative Curriculum. The bar and requirements for assessment kept changing but lingering questions about the "what" and "why" always remained as did questions about how to use that information in a manner that would benefit the child.



The team developed an action plan that addressed those questions as well as others. It includes:

- Crafting a set of guiding principles (questions) that can help them make informed, grounded decisions about the goals and utility of assessment, the testing tools chosen and their applicability to child development and best practices;
- Ensuring that ongoing professional development opportunities around assessment are offered both to ensure reliability of reporters and to increase understanding of objective observation, data collection, testing tool limitations, and methods for combining multiple pieces of information to form a picture of the whole child;
- Initiating conversations within the district about the development of standards for preschoolers that are balanced, meet program needs, satisfy state expectations, and are true to what they know about how children learn and grow;
- Reviewing the Eliot-Pearson Children’s School “Anti-Bias Documentation Framework” and determining how best to implement it in their program;
- Investigating and initiating additional methods for maintaining diversity while meeting program needs (an inclusive special education program with play partners who model strong language and play skills);
- Exploring ways to move the district from the “Open-Door School/proficient” level to the advanced level of a “Partnership School”, as noted in the Academic Parent Teacher model;
- Shifting thinking from a school-centric (we are providing this for you) to a partnership centric (what can we do together) environment; *and*
- Expanding opportunities for engaging and connecting with families including providing time for home visits, evening visits, transportation, and childcare.





PART III  
ACT!  
*We Are Courageous and **Bold***

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*“Actions express priorities.”  
-Mahatma Gandhi*



To successfully accomplish our vision will require personal commitment, competence, character and courage. As drawn from the work of Ron Heifetz and his colleagues,<sup>vii</sup> leadership is the activity of mobilizing the community to tackle tough problems. The purpose of adaptive *leadership* is to help individuals and organizations adapt and thrive in challenging environments. *Adaptive Work* is defined as leading change in a situation where both the problem and the solution are unclear and new learning is required by all the participants.

How do you know when you are facing an adaptive challenge requiring adaptive leadership? There are several questions we might ask: Do we already know solutions? Will the focus of change require new values, habits and behaviors? Do difficult choices need to be made? Will sustainable change take time to achieve? Could an effective or charismatic leader make the change?

Gil Rendle notes how often leaders are asked to “fix” problems instead of learning about new paths. Yet adaptive work cannot be accomplished without engagement by those who “own” the challenge. By definition, a basic premise of adaptive leadership is that the answers for the critical issues confronting us as a field reside within those of us who own the adaptive challenge. The leadership work we are trying to catalyze is a collective activity that needs to engage a wide range of people who are in varied positions and who have diverse points of contact with the field’s adaptive challenges-- rather than the conveyance of solutions from anointed leaders or leaders in positions of authority. Yet in times of distress, the community may desire a charismatic authority that appears active, who has a vision, and who promises stability. This can prevent people from engaging with problems when they must. Charismatic authority can generate a mindless following, or can devolve into bureaucratic institutions. This leadership work will have to be *our* work. It’s time for the early care and education field to hold the mirror up to its own behavior. It’s time to examine the ways in which our responses to change too often hinder the field’s progress and minimize our effectiveness as Architects of Change on behalf of young children, families, and the early care and education field.

So if we recognize that we are facing an adaptive challenge, how do we get started?

1. “Get on the balcony” so that we can understand the big picture.
2. Focus attention. Lay the groundwork. Build awareness.
3. Create a learning environment.
4. Build capacity with others to do the work.
5. Manage tensions.

Tensions should be expected as part of the change process. Disagreement will naturally emerge from engaging with difficult choices and confronting the losses that these choices entail. Heifetz advises adaptive leaders to “keep the work at the centre” (a term for not losing sight of the ultimate goal) even in the face of “work avoidance” strategies to resist the pain, anxiety or conflict that comes with engagement with the problem.

What issues should you begin to tackle? Our answer comes from the advice of Booker T. Washington: “Cast down your bucket where you are”<sup>viii</sup> and begin with your everyday challenges. Your front-line knowledge is an important source of information. You are positioned to see firsthand the needs of the community’s children as well as the needs of our profession. The very issues and solutions for children and ourselves can be gleaned from the situations we see every day.

Reflecting on your everyday challenges can be a formidable, yet deeply satisfying task. Why does courageous action start with your everyday challenges? Because, you experience the day-to-day reality of being an early educator and you have the practical knowledge that forms the core functions of our field. Everyday challenges enable you to crawl, and then walk before your run. Making a difference in the lives of children or in our profession is a commitment that requires your time and will. You will need to schedule time to achieve your goals. This work will need to become a priority for you or even more of a commitment.

## ***Fellows act***

*“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear.”*

*-Meg Cabot*

Fellows underscore their commitment to young children and the profession through intentional and confidently displayed personal and collective acts of courage. They do “The Right Thing” and display courageous acts of personal commitment, competence, and character in the midst of and in spite of criticism and efforts to intimidate, negate and isolate them. They defy the “odds” in both small and large ways through acts, which improve outcomes for young children.

## *Family Childcare/Head Start Provider in Central Massachusetts*

Donna was a member of a team from central Massachusetts. She is a Head Start teacher in a family childcare home. She joined the Fellowship with a strong personal desire to increase her network of allies and supporters for the field of early childhood education. She recognized the importance of reaching out to and educating others about the field and the educational needs of young children if desired changes and a new vision for the education of young children are to be achieved. Donna was also open to learning new skills to and increasing her knowledge about current issues and trends facing the children and families with whom she works.

Donna is a change agent whose capacity for introspection propels her to constantly and intentionally examine her professional challenges, successes, and hopes for the future as well as



shortcomings and areas that can be improved. Her professional vitality is rejuvenated each time as she takes the opportunity to explore and understand what she needs to do in order to keep growing and learning. As a result of her Fellowship experience, and as a by product of her self reflection, she has been able to further develop skills as well as new allies and supporters to assist her efforts to influence learning opportunities, growth and success of the children in her classroom and in her community.

“Action” seems to be Donna’s rallying call. During her Fellowship experience, she joined the newly formed School and Community Coalition in her community. She also joined various other organizations to gain access to relevant information that she could share with colleagues, parents, and political leaders. Impressed with what she learned from Dr. Karen Mapp’s presentation, she immediately shared this information with the members of The School and Community Coalition, the local Community Partnership for Children, the Director of MOC Childcare and Head Start Services, and the Principal and Superintendent of the local High School. She also talked to the district’s Family Engagement Coordinator and informed her about the CAYL EEFI meetings while encouraging her to apply to become part of future CAYL EEFI trainings.

She discussed the importance of family engagement with her fellow Head Start family childcare providers and encouraged them to browse the Massachusetts Brain Building in Progress website to find ideas that they could share with parents. She also suggested that they hold parent meetings together once a month to strengthen families, an idea that was welcomed and will be implemented in the fall of the 2013-2014 school year. In addition she talked to the local High School Council about including family engagement as part of the school improvement strategy and they agreed to include it in the next school improvement plan. She shared videos and information with her school Principal and staff and asked them to consider doing the 75-minute parent-teacher meeting instead of the usual 15-minute meetings. Although she has not yet convinced them to make the change, she has not given up on trying.



Based on information she learned about early learning standards during the Fellowship, Donna is determined that the Massachusetts Early Learning Preschool and Kindergarten Standards could benefit from a revision, so she decided to contact central office EEC staff and inform them about the need to revise them. She is hopeful that the Standards will be revised and is looking forward to getting involved in the process when they are.

### ***Metro Boston Team***

A dynamic team of educators came from the Metro Boston area. The team was composed of public school employees, family childcare providers, Directors of non-profits, and center-based Directors. Their interest in the Fellowship were to secure connections with each other; to expand and enrich their knowledge of vital issues impacting the field and to identify ideas and knowledge that would help them gain new perspectives on the needs of the community. Creating an action plan which would allow them to accomplish something of both short and long term benefit for the children and families of their community was high on their agenda. They were intentional in their desire to build a foundation for their community that would help children blossom, academically, physically, socially and emotionally.

As individuals and programs, the team members faced different realities. As a result, their individual ability to move forward on an issue immediately varied. For example, some team members were able to immediately integrate The Anti-Bias Documentation Framework as a tool in their lesson plans and team meetings and refocus their work on trying to build a more inclusive curriculum and community environment.

One participant related what went through her mind as she listened to Debbie LeeKeenan's presentation and how she planned to utilize the information:

When Debbie spoke of “children with special rights” it was very powerful and a better way than speaking of children with special needs. I will use that in my work with children and families. My center is very diverse so I must be more pro-active in creating strategic and intentional forms that are redone to reflect a new normal society. Instead of mother/father on the applications, I will use terminology that is more reflective such as guardian1, guardian2. Administration and staff will review our mission statement to create a culture that fosters mutual respect, trust and collaboration. Many of the activities that Debbie shared in her presentation can be tried in our center. For example, we can create one half of a self-portrait; have children draw the classroom rules; make shadow pictures; make finger puppets of family; pictures of families around the world; and have the children write about their own abilities and challenges in their own book. The staff and administrator can create a place for honest reflection at staff meetings and discuss ways to incorporate anti-bias curriculum into all aspects of the classroom and center. We recently had a 10-hour

training at our center from the Anti-Defamation League and plan to set goals and use strategies to include families, staff, children and community. My role as a director will be redefined with focus on anti-bias work.

Another participant decided it was time for a family engagement upgrade at her site and initiated steps to create a strategy for a whole school improvement with shared responsibility. *“My goal is to have a partnership with families that is beyond the bake sale and festivals and improving educational outcomes for children. I will work to ensure my center is providing a welcoming atmosphere for all families and honor, respect and include all families and work collaboratively to set goals to be inclusive of everyone.”*

A team member with a pre-planned professional day in June decided to utilize information from the presentation on assessment as a training tool for her teachers. The importance of assessments and the need to train the teachers on how to use them effectively was reinforced for her; she knew she needed to share CAYL’s resources with her teachers and colleagues in the field.

As a team they developed an action plan that addressed their most immediate needs as well as those that can be addressed in the future. It includes:

- Developing a list of shareable resources that will benefit the community;
- Increasing outreach and communication with stakeholders;
- Fundraising to purchase the Gold 2 on-line assessment tool and provide resources to train staff on the use of the program;
- Engaging in a partnership with other organizations to address transportation and group admission issues as it relates to field trips and expanded learning opportunities for the summer season;
- Developing and instituting practices and procedures that can help improve documentation for individualized child outcomes;
- Participating in the movement to fix the preschool guidelines and provide children with the social and emotional foundation they need; *and*
- Committing to meeting monthly and further develop a collaborative leadership model.





# Part IV Accelerate We Believe and Achieve!

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*“Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.”*  
-Ralph Waldo Emerson

We agree with Mark Twain when he said: "The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

Before we can accelerate we must get started.

We ask EEFI Fellows: How can we, and how can *you*, help young children succeed and advance our profession?

Inspired by the tenacity, passion, and commitment of so many early educators in our field, EEFI helps early educators to stake out and claim space for creating a new culture of caring of all children. Let's be clear: we do this not only because each child deserves it, but also because it is the right thing to do. And early educators deserve to have a place of honor and respect in this culture.

Despite poor compensation and lack of respect, EEFI participants volunteer to devote their Saturdays, without any compensation, to participate in this initiative. These Fellows challenge themselves – even beyond their comfort zone – to articulate a vision, assume a shared identity, align what they know with what they do and act with courage and confidence. Fellows rise to these challenges because they know they must be the leaders that imagine the world as it *ought* to be for young children and for the people who work with them. They must be the leaders whose patterns of action construct the pathways that lead to progressive steps for all children.

Time and time again we are reminded of how much conscious choice and intention it takes to make a difference in the lives of children and their families. In all of the stories from early educators and our field and in everything we do at The CAYL Institute, we see early educators reflect, plan and move to take action. Early educators want to advance our profession, to consistently achieve the best outcomes for all children, and to take responsibility for collective problem solving. Every act we take leaves a "ripple of hope"

Today, we not only work to create change, we have the opportunity and conscience to **accelerate the pace of change** for young children and our profession. What does it mean to accelerate? We have to pick up the pace...pick up speed. We can only increase speed by getting traction. As state houses and the White House become attuned to the importance of the early years, we accelerate change when we hasten, step up, speed up, stimulate, advance, promote, spur and quicken a sense of urgency for change. Acceleration is the rate at which an object changes its speed or velocity. We believe we must now seize every opportunity to pick up speed. There may never be a better chance to achieve more urgency and advance our profession.

How quickly we can increase the quality of change is a measure of acceleration. The type of power we exercise, the types of networks we build and sustain and the intensity of our focus are all factors that affect the acceleration of change. While the rate of change-- Acceleration-- is controlled by elements both inside and external to the field of early care and education, we definitely have a role to play in getting traction.

Our theory about how change is accelerated for both young children and for early educators focuses on the development and actions of the field's leadership both today and tomorrow. To accelerate change will require that families as well as academic, business, and education leaders work collaboratively to address the field's most pressing challenges and opportunities. We accelerate change by bringing together talented emerging and established leaders from a variety of sectors to build their capacity and better serve their communities. The CAYL Institute accelerates change by offering intensive Fellowships, by building organizational capacity, and by



engaging, mentoring and coaching multiple stakeholders. We believe that change is accelerated as a result of who people are and what people do because this is how traction is gained-- and better traction will serve to increase speed.

Before we begin to accelerate, our leadership must clearly understand two important factors: First: acceleration tactics require a strategic framework for understanding, diagnosing and or managing change. Second, we must recognize that change is a process, not an event, as is evident by the many stories we have shared of change-agents.

To accelerate we ask Fellows to:

- Begin with your everyday challenges
- Unite: Find a confidential community and share leadership
- Focus on what you want, not what you don't want
- Gather your allies

We must always seek opportunities to link with other initiatives, communities, and sectors as appropriate. Nothing builds momentum like a strong and trusted alliance. It's the difference between the 'little engine that could' chugging along and the high-speed rail, pulling multiple cars, engineered and operated by early educators.

This is the information age and like it or not, data is the stock and trade – the coin of the day. These acceleration steps define the tactics it will take for all of us as leaders to create high-quality and developmentally appropriate early care and education programs for all children.

## ***Fellows Accelerate***

Fellows scrutinize and take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way. They attach urgency to their efforts and keep it moving. “Never let up” is their operating motto. They find and affiliate with confidential communities that help sustain and encourage them while on their journey and enhance their sense of belonging to something important. They document and communicate their successes with each other and the community in large and seek opportunities to “spread the word.”

### ***Center Based Preschool Teacher in Metro Boston***

Cindy was a member of a team from the metro Boston area, which is composed of public and private center based preschool programs and Early Learning centers. She is a preschool teacher of four and five year olds located in a public school setting. Her interest in joining the Fellowship was to expand her leadership skills and knowledge base as well as her circle of professional relationships. She was excited about the opportunity to interact with a group of like-minded individuals who cared deeply about the education of young children. Her interest was fueled in part by her belief that she has reached a point in her life where giving back to the larger community, and not just the children and families in her classroom, was warranted. She felt the need to do more and saw the Fellowship as a beginning step in her journey to answering that call. She felt the Fellowship offered her an opportunity to be challenged and stretched in ways that might not otherwise be possible. She states:

I want to want for more, give more than I thought I could, and keep reaching to bring our early educator community leveled equality for all children and professionals in the field. I want to keep wondering and inquiring and ultimately turn those ideas into real action plans with individuals that are passionate about making a difference right now!

The Fellowship experience was eye opening for her. Speakers presented information and discussed aspects of the profession about which she had not previously been aware. She was excited throughout and remarked, “*My mind was challenged, I know more about the breath and depth of this field!*” She was so impressed with the information provided through Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan’s presentation that she immediately shared it with her peers, allies and also her Principal. She has championed the cause of having her program go through the NAEYC accreditation process.

Debbie LeeKeenan’s presentation on anti-bias work marked the beginning of what she considers a personal paradigm shift and the start of personal reflection on her every day work with children and families. Of particular value to her was the discussion relating to how to create a place for honest reflection in a school setting. It’s a model she felt strongly that needed to be incorporated within the work of the early childhood team in her school. She spoke with her grade level partner and Principal about incorporating anti-bias work into their professional development sessions planned for the next school year.

The Fellowship experience also helped her to get a better sense of the struggles and isolation that Family Care Providers go through since they often work alone. She felt they could really benefit from a support group to help each other with the issues that they come across daily and to keep



Debbie LeeKeenan and Valora Washington

up with the changing early childhood field. She identified a group of family childcare providers that she believed could benefit from the process of networking and subsequently has invited them to a Communities of Practice network, which was originally started for group providers.

The information gained from Dr. Jones' session on assessment made her realize that this was an area that she needed to


personally strengthen which has led her to engage in more extensive research around assessment and early education policy.

Cindy has immersed herself in activities that can lead to solid change in the system she is involved with as well as the field as a whole. Through partnerships and the development of new relationships, she has learned about upcoming priorities and changes in the Early Childhood Department within BPS. She made a connection with Critical Friends Group, which she hopes to join. This coming summer, she may have the chance to work with new kindergartners and their families who have never had any formal schooling prior to their entry into the public school. She is also planning to run for the BAEYC Board as a result of encouragement from other Fellowship participants.

### ***Non-profit Educator in Southeast/Cape Cod***

Janice is VP of Youth Development at a non-profit and was a member of a team from the Southeast/Cape Cod area. Her goals in joining the Fellowship were to acquire new tools and knowledge which could assist her efforts to improve collaboration and build bridges between her families and educators; create a shared vision and identity for her team; and, support the center Directors who report to her by sharing new skills and knowledge so they may take responsibility to initiate change in each classroom through action, practice and policy.

Janice delved headfirst into the Fellowship experience and found every aspect to be useful and important in meeting the goals she had set. She was an enthusiastic participant and engaging listener who was purposeful in her zeal to utilize every aspect of the training for the benefit of her program and community. While much of what she learned could not be immediately acted upon, there was one area in which she was able to accelerate the learning process for her staff and maximize the benefits to her program.



Janice found that the anti-bias education (ABE) presentation, discussion and tools helped increase her understanding and expand her views on what ABE is. It cemented her belief that developmentally appropriate practice needs to be culturally responsive in order to be successful. She was immediately able to envision practical application of this new information. It provided her a roadmap for instituting an ABE framework for her program, including development of self-awareness strategies for staff, and creation of the pedagogical environment and strategies to strengthen relationships with community and families. One of the challenges facing Janice and her staff prior to Debbie's talk about building an ABE stance was the thought that all cultures must be included. The presentation clarified for her the importance of thinking long and hard about the goal to support children as a necessary approach in developing a positive individual and group identity within a cultural context. She began to understand how critically important it was to teach her educators that differences need to be explored and celebrated in all facets of the child's day and that diversity should be valued as all people are important! She was able to accelerate dissemination and implementation of that information almost immediately.

Prior to beginning the Fellowship, Janice and her Early Education directors had been in the process of planning an Early Educators Retreat. The focus of the day was learning new ways to include and serve children with special needs. As a result of the Fellowship Janice decided to open the retreat with an hour-long introduction to ABE! They were able to utilize the Power Point presentation as a resource and facilitate small group discussions and reports. Janice reports that the fifty educators who participated in the retreat found the hour long ABE presentation/training to be a valuable component of their professional development day; they reported a new appreciation of why ABE was critical in early childhood and how they intended to support all dimensions through curriculum, interactions with children and families and the classroom environment. Janice has made a personal and professional commitment to ensure that the ABE stance is embedded in her educators' professional development and educators' monthly meetings moving forward.



# Conclusion

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*“The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones.”  
-Confucius*



The CAYL Institute is about change and change makers-- about people and a profession with an extraordinary capacity.

The CAYL Institute also recognizes the obstacles to change: wavering courage, giant challenges, and uncertain responses when our colleagues feel the weighty burdens of feeling intimidated, negated, or isolated. We work to offer them hope and strategies so that they can be Architects of Change.



In more than three decades of working with early educators, we have certainly heard our colleagues describe many obstacles in their midst. We have had the privilege of participating in intimate, trusted and focused dialog with thousands of early educators. Through these conversations, we have heard early educators define their dreams, their hopes and their fears for themselves and for the children and families to whom they are dedicated. Too often the joy of being in the company of children is accompanied by sorrows of isolation, intimidation and negation. These weights pervade the individual's daily work and entire being as the early educator is typically poorly paid, uncelebrated, and vulnerable. Worse, they often feel that they cannot do what they "know" is "right" because it is not popular or safe or affordable or valued in our achievement-test driven society.

The Early Educators Fellowship Initiative is designed to support, encourage, and empower these early educators. Following three years of efforts it is clear that early educators are making progress, building momentum, and taking a stance to advance the field and support young children and their families.

There are many excellent analyses of the challenges facing young children and the early care and education field. Valora Washington with her colleague, Stacie Goffin, struck a chord with their publication of one such analysis, *Ready or Not: Leadership Choices in Early Care and Education*.<sup>ix</sup> Goffin and Washington noted the irony of a field whose knowledge base about how to care for and educate young children effectively has exploded, yet we tolerate a "performance gap" as that knowledge is not applied to settings with all children. A similar irony rests in acknowledging the strength of advocacy in helping the public understand the promise of preschool, yet we face a growing "credibility gap" as early educators cannot fulfill the promises with existing resources. The field's ability to address these ironies is hampered by its internal fractures and tendency to rely on lofty principles to justify its work. Goffin and Washington warn the field of early care and education to act with urgency to better define its purpose, identity and responsibilities. This "adaptive work" is necessary to counterbalance the prevailing strength of external influences on the

field-- influences that too often seem like Goliath pressing against the field's ethical principles and educational traditions.

“But how do we get started?” is perhaps the most frequent dilemma expressed by early educators in response to the call for change. While in agreement with the idea that we face adaptive challenges, early educators press us for examples and strategies that will encourage and guide their daily work. To the individual practitioner, the challenge feels Goliathian with few discernible pathways.

Recognizing the quest for courage and community in so many of her colleagues, Valora Washington established the CAYL Institute in 2004 for the purpose of supporting and directing early care and education leaders to be “Architects of Change.” Intending to organize, equip and empower people to create change on behalf of children, CAYL brings disparate parts of the field together to create solutions to the everyday challenges of working as an early educator. CAYL's approach immerses participants in constructive active learning experiences, typically outside of one's comfort zone, based on the idea that innovation is not going to happen by seminars, training or workshops without engagement with the real world. CAYL fosters collegial debate, cooperation and coordination in the belief that the field will flourish when we early educators can be proactive in defining our own truths and proactively seek appropriate solutions.<sup>x</sup>

This is a report about change and change makers.

This is a report about obstacles to change.

And, this is also a report about *how* to accomplish change, *how* to make a difference, and *how* to take action.

Education is the foundation of all other professions, and of our civil society. We can all be proud of the accomplishments of our public education system and for the ways in which it has served to transform and energize our society. We must help early care and education services to be understood as part of that system, even when those services are not located in a “school.” Now we are in desperate need of a public conversation about what counts in education, especially early education from the youngest years of life ...and we should decide how we will measure what counts, and not just count what is easy to measure.

We are motivated by our dedication to help all young children succeed *and* to advance the field of early care and education. Therefore, we intend to continue CAYL's efforts to help others *analyze, advance, act upon and accelerate the pace of change in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.*

# Appendix A

## About the CAYL Institute

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**The CAYL Institute** envisions a nation where the right to high-quality early care and education is embedded in public policy, professional practice, and parental engagement. **Our purpose** is to organize, equip, and empower people to create change on behalf of children. We do this by focusing on our core principles:

- 1) **Representative Leadership:** Involving people in decisions that affect them.
- 2) **Commitment to Diversity:** Ensuring all voices are heard and bridging the multiple perspectives.
- 3) **Focused Solutions:** Embracing responsibility to create sustainable change.
- 4) **Impact and Innovation:** Taking action that is timely, relevant, and immediately actionable.
- 5) **Building and Sharing Knowledge:** Creating and disseminating strategic information to be understood and used by everyone.

### ***The qualifications of the CAYL Institute are as follows:***

- ✦ Extensive experience working effectively and inclusively on a statewide basis.
- ✦ Excellent capacity to build community and to offer high-touch, high-impact work in schools and other early care and education programs.
- ✦ Knowledge about child development, family engagement and community assistance in helping children develop lifelong learning skills.
- ✦ Experience building skills and knowledge with diverse early educators to include the pedagogy and developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) of early childhood education.
- ✦ Experience supporting early educators and administrators in connecting the relationship of policies and family-community partnerships to the potential of young learners, and building common ground between early childhood and elementary educators regarding developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) for teaching young children.
- ✦ Creates and sustains capacity for professional dialogue and community, thereby building common ground between early childhood and elementary educators regarding developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) for teaching young children.

Since 2004, the CAYL Institute has been engaged in constructing a shared purpose, knowledge base, and sense of responsibility across early learning sectors. We build learning communities through early care and education Fellowships and conferences, as well as community-based dialogue. In everything we do, CAYL creates learning communities that strengthen individual



and collective capacity to lead efforts to teach young children, work with families, and influence local and state policies that affect the care and education of young children.

CAYL has a proven track record of success<sup>xi</sup> in the realm of professional development for early educators that introduces a new way of thinking about the needs of young learners and teaches a new pedagogy toward their improved developmental and academic outcomes.

Independent evaluations have found that as a result of CAYL's work, participants learn how to become strong advocates for young children, establish high-quality learning environments in their schools and communities, promote family involvement and cultural competence as a key factor to success, extend and develop sustainable peer learning networks with the CAYL Institute, and champion policy changes at the local, district, and state levels.

We invite you to join our community:

**Facebook** [www.facebook.com/CAYLInstitute](http://www.facebook.com/CAYLInstitute)

**Twitter** [www.twitter.com/caylinstitute](http://www.twitter.com/caylinstitute)

**Website** [www.cayl.org](http://www.cayl.org)

**Online Discussion Forum** [www.cayl.org/forum](http://www.cayl.org/forum)

We also encourage you to call us to provide support or technical assistance in your communities or programs.

# Appendix B

## The Early Educators Fellowship Initiative

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The Early Educators Fellowship Initiative creates a series of learning experiences for early educators across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Since 2010, over 360 early educators have participated in this intensive Fellowship, which allowed access to national experts, in-depth learning experiences, and the opportunity for shared learning and reflection amongst their peers.

### ***The 2010-2011 Early Educators Fellowship Initiative***

The 2010-2011 Early Educators Fellowship Initiative focused on three content areas while intentionally building community and cross-sector perspectives. Those three content areas were: *child growth and development*, *literacy* and *dual language learners*. Our goal: building high-quality learning environments regardless of sector for our earliest school-ready children, in partnership with families and communities across the Commonwealth.

### ***2010-2011 Guest Experts***

**Lilian Katz** engaged the Fellows with her strategies, beliefs, and vision for children's social and cognitive development. Literacy expert **Susan B. Neuman** addressed many concepts from her book, *Changing the Odds for Children at Risk: Seven Essential Principles of Educational Programs that Break the Cycle of Poverty*. **Linda Espinosa**, a specialist in the education of dual language learners, offered knowledge and data that painted a compelling picture of the challenges dual language learners face.

### ***2010-2011 Demographic Data***

Total Early Educators in Fellowship: 108

<b>District Demographics</b>		
44	41%	Commissioner's District Attendees
14	13%	Level Four school attendees
3	3%	Attendees in close proximity to a Level Four school

<b>Geographic Diversity of Participants</b>		
32	30%	Metro Boston
28	26%	Southeast and Cape Cod
8	7%	Western MA
15	14%	Central MA
25	23%	Northeast

Sector Diversity of Participants		
28	26%	Public School Systems
50	46%	Community-Based Programs
10	9%	Private Preschools
56	5%	Head Start
6	6%	Family Childcare
9	8%	Not specified

## ***The 2011-2012 Early Educators Fellowship Initiative***

The 2011-2012 Early Educators Fellowship Initiative was based on the same successful platform as the previous year with one significant exception. In order to facilitate more intentional cross sector collaboration, participants were asked to apply as a member of a team consisting of representatives from different sectors of care working in the same community. These teams worked together throughout the Fellowship, in and outside the scheduled meetings, to create an action plan where they can work together to address a problem in their community. Teams were provided tools to facilitate and guide their community-based meetings in-between fellowship sessions.

The CAYL Institute intentionally worked to build statewide and local learning communities for the purpose of creating and building “shared identity” among “all early educators” regardless of sector (public school, head start, etc.). Not only were the Fellows members of cross-sector teams from the same community, each Fellowship meeting included time for informal and formal networking. Activities were designed to help participants interact by job-alike as well as community teams. In addition, participants were given access to tools and resources necessary to become fluent in transferring quantitative data into qualitative results. These elements were brought together with the intent to give participants and teams the opportunity to assess, reflect, and develop identifiable goals and action plans based on the information they learned from the speakers and small group discussions.

## ***2011-2012 Guest Experts***

**Barbara Bowman**, the Chief Officer of Early Childhood Education for the Chicago Public Schools, spoke on the topic of *providing a continuum of support for children from birth through third grade*. From Children’s Hospital Boston and the University of Massachusetts Boston, **Dr. Ed Tronick** discussed *social emotional development* of young children. **Rebecca Soden** from the Clayton Early Learning Center in Denver, Colorado addressed the topic of *effectively promoting STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)* activities with young children.

## 2011-2012 Demographic Data

Total Early Educators in Fellowship: 140

Total Teams: 31

<b>District Demographics by Team</b>		
10	32%	Groups from prioritized regions
0	0%	Groups with Level Four school attendees
1	3%	Groups with attendees in close proximity with Level Four Schools
2	6%	Groups with Level Three schools attendees
3	9%	Groups with attendees in close proximity with Level Three Schools

<b>Geographic Diversity by Team</b>		
6	19.5%	Metro Boston
6	19.5%	Southeast and Cape Cod
2	6%	Western MA
9	29%	Central MA
8	26%	Northeast

<b>Sector Diversity by Team</b>		
39	21%	Public School System
42	30%	Center Based Preschools
17	12%	Head Start
20	14%	Family Childcare
31	22%	Other



## The 2012-2013 Early Educators Fellowship Initiative

The 2012-2013 Early Educators Fellowship Initiative was built on the same successful model of the previous cohort. Fellows participated in teams from their communities that facilitated purposeful cross-sector collaboration. The Fellowship was modeled around four sessions instead of three like it had been in the previous years. Teams worked together throughout the Fellowship, in and outside the scheduled meetings, to address specific needs and concerns that were pertinent and relevant to their individual communities and programs and create an action plan that would enable them to address their stated issues as a community of early educators. Teams were provided tools to facilitate and guide their community-based meetings in-between fellowship sessions.

### 2012-2013 Guest Experts

**Debbie LeeKeenan** spoke on “Creating an anti-bias program: The leader’s role.” **Dr. Karen Mapp** spoke on “The role of family engagement from birth through age eight in promoting school success.” The third session featured **Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan**, who spoke to the Fellows about “Taking early learning standards from theory to change to practice.” The last session featured **Dr. Jacqueline Jones** who spoke about “Using assessment to individualize teaching.”

### General Data

Total Early Educators in Fellowship: 151

Total Teams: 20

District Demographics by Team		
10	50%	Groups from Prioritized Regions
6	30%	Groups with Level Four school attendees

Geographic Diversity by Team		
6	30%	Metro Boston
4	20%	Southeast and Cape Cod
3	15%	Western MA
4	20%	Central MA
2	10%	Northeast


Sector Diversity by Team		
54	36%	Public School Systems
41	27%	Center Based Preschools
9	6%	Head Start
12	8%	Family Childcare
5	3%	Private School
14	9%	Non-profit
17	11%	Other

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- viii In 1895, Booker T. Washington gave what later came to be known as the Atlanta Compromise speech before the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. His address was one of the most important and influential speeches in American history, guiding African-American resistance to white discrimination and establishing Washington as one of the leading black spokesmen in America. Washington's speech stressed accommodation rather than resistance to the racist order under which Southern African Americans lived. In this speech he uttered those famous words, "cast down your bucket where you are."
- ix Goffin, S. and Washington, V., & (2008). *Ready or not*. New York: Teachers College Press.
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The CAYL Institute (2010). *Principals toolkit*. Cambridge, MA: The CAYL Institute.
- xi To learn more about the impact of the CAYL Institute:  
**Read about the *Organizational Policy Leadership and the CAYL Schott Fellowship*.** One of the desired results of the CAYL Institute is for Fellows to work and become policy and field leaders in areas of early care and education. This case study describes two organizations that have had multiple staff participate in the Fellowship program over several years. These organizations offered to become case studies so that the CAYL Schott Fellowship could learn how organizations with multiple Fellows engage in and develop policy leadership within their organizations. Please visit: <http://cayl.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Final-org-case-studies-approved-for-web-site.pdf>  
**Read about the *Experiences and Impact of the CAYL Principal Fellows*.** The **CAYL Principals Fellowship**, established in 2006, creates a learning community for elementary school Principals to strengthen their individual and collective capacity to lead efforts to integrate PreKindergarten (PreK) children into their schools and to influence district and state level policies that affect the education of young children. The Fellowship provides an intensive yearlong learning experience for promising leaders of elementary schools, including quarterly trainings and seminars, site visits, field trips, and distance learning activities. To read the report, "Architects of Change: The Experiences and Impact of the CAYL Principal Fellows," **visit** <http://cayl.org/publications/>



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**Read about the *Experiences and Impact of the CAYL Schott Fellows*.** The **CAYL Schott Fellowship**, established in 2004, provides an intensive yearlong learning experience for promising policy leaders in early care and education. This report summarizes the evaluation results of the Fellowship. In sum, data show that the CAYL Schott Fellowship creates a learning community where leaders gain confidence and new skills; expand their networks; and learn to step into leadership positions, lead organizational change, train future leaders, and impact policy. To read the report, "Architects of Change: The Experiences and Impact of the CAYL Schott Fellows," <http://cayl.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/2009CAYLSchottArchitectsofChange.pdf>