



Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, March 13, 2025

Meeting Time: 9:00-10:00am

External Participants: 9

Kim Lamz – CCR&R Director – 4-C: Community Coordinated Child Care

Dina Alzeer – Higher Education Navigator – 4-C: Community Coordinated Child Care

Susie Carrington – Birth to Five IL Region 16

Kristin Schulz – Executive Director - Child Development and Family Center with Northern Illinois University (NIU)

Rachel Engel – Director – Walnut Street Daycare Center, Genoa IL

Malia Jones – Family and Community Engagement Specialist – Birth to Five Illinois

Aaron Confer – Youth Development Director – Kishwaukee Family YMCA

Samantha McDavid – Coordinator for Early Learning Programs – DeKalb County Regional Office of Education

Steve Kimmel – Early Childhood Teacher – Kishwaukee Education Consortium (KEC)

Internal participants: 8

Jud Curry – Dean – ACSS/MS

Ariel Owens – Associate Dean – ACSS/MS

Alea Akers – former ECE Academic Advisor

Terry Lyn Funston – Director – Curriculum and Program Development

Lauren Duval – new ECE Academic Advisor

Anna Harvey – ECE Adjunct Instructor

Maria Lombardo – Director – Kishwaukee College Early Learning Center & ECE Adjunct Instructor

Kailey Bednarek – Administrative Specialist I – ACSS/MS

I. Program Updates

- A. Kish enrollment increased by 11.3% over spring 2024 enrollment numbers. Enrollment for Early Childhood Education (ECE) has increased 40% overall from the previous academic year, with a 23.8% increase from Fall 2023 to Fall 2024, and a 1.6% increase from Spring 2024 to Spring 2025.
- B. Kish continues to work to lower student costs, eliminating textbook costs by rolling those costs into new “all-in” tuition plan. ECE has contributed to textbook savings via grant-funded purchases of textbook collections.
- C. Summer 2025 will offer ECE 212 (Admin of Day Care Homes) and ECE 231 (Infant/Toddler Development). Fall 2025 will be adding in-person and daytime sections for ECE 111 (The Developing Child) and ECE 161 (Family-Community



Relations). Will also be adding ECE 211 (Facility Organization & Supervision) as an elective option.

- D. Lauren Duval will be taking over for ECE advising as Alea Akers transfers into a new advising role.

II. ECACE/State Updates

- A. The Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE) Scholarships will continue to be funded by the state at \$5 million as opposed to the prior \$76 million. Priority will go to current recipients. Second priority will go to new applicants within 30 hours or less to credential completion. The Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) anticipates ECACE scholarship application to be available at the end of March.
 - i. Students with (Child Development Associate (CDA) credential will continue receiving 6 credit hours for prior learning
 - ii. The Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) virtual scenario-based Gateways Level 2 technology will no longer be available starting in June. Kish plans to collaborate with INCCRRA to continue using the PLA materials while adjusting for the loss of technology.

III. Employer Feedback and Discussion

- A. 4-C proposed that Kish become the new host for the fall Child Care University Conference. Previously hosted by Sauk Valley, this event continues to draw many more attendees from DeKalb County and areas to the east. This would serve as a professional development and networking opportunity for ECE students and Kish ECE faculty could propose breakout sessions.
- B. Kish and 4-C will also explore ECE student volunteer opportunities for the Week of the Young Child events April 7-11.
- C. Kishwaukee YMCA offered potential opportunities for ECE students to gain practical experience with the before/after school care and summer camps.
- D. Discussion of benefits of getting interested HS students into early childhood environments sooner and building confidence. Also discussed teaching them how to manage large groups of children and gain earlier exposure to that kind of environment.
- E. Discussion about the challenges of providing clinical, practicum, and volunteer opportunities for students due to required DCFS background check process. Proposal to start having students complete background checks earlier in their degree pathway so ease the transfer/recruitment process.