

Gov. J.B. Pritzker Awards \$1.3 M in IBHE Childhood Workforce Grants

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SPRINGFIELD – Knowing that effective, skilled, and diverse early childhood educators are a lynchpin to classroom quality, Gov. JB Pritzker has awarded the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) \$1.3 million in grants to strengthen the early childhood workforce. The funding comes from a \$13.4 million grant to Illinois from the federal Preschool Development Birth to Five Renewal Grant.

Funds will be used by colleges and universities to help early educators attain a credential or degree. That could mean providing supports such as tailored advising and mentoring, job-embedded coaching, access to technology, transportation, childcare, and supports for course and other administrative and instructional fees. Illinois has a history of institution-led programs of tailored supports for early childhood educators, and evaluations have demonstrated that they can be helpful for current early childhood educators pursuing degrees or credentials to improve their practice.

“We want to see more early educators gain credentials in order to improve access to high quality early childhood education for families across the state,” said Illinois Board of Higher Education Executive Director Ginger Ostro. “And we need to make sure that early childhood workers—particularly those who are minorities and low-income—have the resources necessary to succeed. This grant will help open up opportunities for early childhood workers throughout the state.”

Dr. Jamilah R. Jor’dan, Acting Executive Director of the Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD), said, “These cohorts represent a scaling up of Illinois’ efforts to support early childhood professionals in attaining additional degrees and credentials and strengthening their practice. Responsive, personalized cohorts provide current educators with the tools they need to be successful in pursuing further education, which can pay dividends for themselves and their families, the children and families they serve, as well as their communities.”

According to the Illinois Career Information System and Illinois Department of Employment Security, the need for well-prepared teachers is expected to grow by nearly 10 percent in the next six years.

IBHE is now looking for proposals from Illinois community colleges and four-year institutions that plan to support groups of early childhood educators next academic year as they pursue an Illinois Gateways credential or degree. For more information about how to apply for the grant, go to ibhe.org/IBHE-EC4.html.

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