PASSING THE BATON...

PLEASE WELCOME CAROL AUSTIN

From Patricia Baxter, DVAEYC Board Chair:

With early childhood education and publicly funded pre-k on the front burner of Philadelphia politics as well as of opinion and policy makers across the state, DVAEYC is continually grateful for your role in advancing early childhood education and proud to announce an exciting leadership transition. Carol Austin, a former senior executive at the Philadelphia Youth Network, a multi-million dollar education and youth development non-profit organization, has become our new Executive Director effective, June 6, 2016. Carol is a dynamic woman with a lifelong dedication to advancing education policy in her adopted hometown of Philadelphia. As Carol puts it, “Great things start in Philadelphia—it’s where it all started!”

From Carol Austin, DVAEYC Executive Director:

What has inspired me most in these last couple of weeks is the passion people have for this work, and the unbelievable talent that is here. I’m really impressed by the commitment of DVAEYC staff to empowering people in the field to really fulfill on being world class teachers, and providing world class opportunities for the children in their programs. I am excited, and ready to do whatever is needed so that teachers can deliver the best instruction, so they can really be empowered, so they can be paid as they deserve to be paid as professionals in the field.

My career has been spent working on behalf of children. It’s been children on the other end of the age spectrum—just before they emerge as adults to go into the world. I’ve worked on redesigning high schools, and on youth workforce development. That’s been great work. But the opportunity to work with and on behalf of children on the beginning point of the spectrum, that really is the opportunity to change the world—because the kind of start we give them will make all the difference in the life that they get to live. It’s unbelievable to me, the more I think of it, that I have this opportunity to impact children right at the beginning. It’s a blessing.

I’m coming at a time that Philadelphia seems ready to fulfill on its promise to the children of the city that we give them the very best and nothing but the best because that’s what they deserve. Given that Philadelphia is the city of firsts, I love that this is the first city of its kind to fund early childhood education in this unprecedented way. At the same time, at the state level, we’re advocating for a big increase in that budget so we can give high quality opportunities to all of our young children.

It’s rewarding and fulfilling to be a part of all this. I am honored to get to be of service, to be able to stand on the shoulders of all of you who’ve been in this fight, some of you for decades. All the work that you have done—a pocket here, a program there—has brought us to this point. Now this is a national conversation. I want to honor the people who have been in the trenches for generations and for decades. I want you to really get that it’s the work you have done that’s brought us to this point. And it’s not over. But we’re finally ready to launch, and that’s what we’re doing. We’re launching and fulfilling on our promise to the children in this city and this region. Finally.
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Victory In Philadelphia!

Philadelphia early childhood advocates were critical in the big win in June for Mayor Kenney’s universal pre-K plan. Thirteen City Council members ultimately stood up to more than $4 million worth of beverage industry pressure to do the right thing for Philadelphia kids. The bill was signed into law on June 20. And at the next chapter begins, as the city prepares to deliver on filling 2000 high-quality pre-K slots by January. DVAEYC was instrumental in building a foundation of good wages into the program, and is working hard, along with other ECE advocates, to ensure that the process is inclusive and ends up benefiting both early childhood teachers and the children in their care.

What If We Made Money?

Establishing the True Cost of Care

Tyrone Scott, DVAEYC Director of External Relations

My most vivid memory from childhood is my mother saying “You can only have one,” as she saw me eyeing the TastyKake cupcakes she had purchased. “I work hard every day to make money for food, but you cannot just eat whatever, whenever. We can afford for you to eat one a day,” we were told not, but we definitely had to budget, and my mother ensured we only spent what we earned. She knew exactly how much she had to spend per week on my brother and I. My most vivid memory from childhood is my mother saying “You can only have one,” as she saw me eyeing the TastyKake cupcakes she had purchased. “I

100 passionate ECE advocates converged on the Capitol in Harrisburg for Early Childhood Action Day, 2016. Though the crowd was smaller than in past years, many were veterans who knew exactly how to make the most of their time. Those who were new were excited to discover that legislators are just people, and got a taste for how they might build on this experience in the future. Congratulations to everybody who played a role, in Harrisburg or during Action Day at home.

BEST PRACTICE

ECE Teacher Preparation “Gold Standard” for Institutions of Higher Education

A Project of the ECE Workforce Transformation Initiative

Based on our understanding of the needs of employers and students, and the identified gaps in our current system, ECEWTI created a Gold Standard for Institutions of Higher Education, to include:

- Curriculum content speaks to local/state ECE sector.
- Adequate coursework focused on birth through five, including infanthood.
- Field placements that start early in the student’s program so they can inform reflection in the classroom, and are located in high-quality ECE programs.
- Tuition rates that take into consideration the ECE industry’s current wages.
- Flexibility and supports that allows for the participation of full-time workers and non-traditional learners.
- Full articulation between two- and four-year degrees.
- Accreditation by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) and CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation).
- Ensuring that any on-site ECE programs meet the highest quality ratings.
- Full-time faculty, and faculty with experience in the field.
- Curriculum content that addresses inclusion of children with identified special needs.

From the Field:

ECE Teacher Preparation “Gold Standard” for Institutions of Higher Education

A Project of the ECE Workforce Transformation Initiative

Cherie Crosby, Professor, Manor College

I am a proponent of making sure that ECE teachers have authentic experiences, and am proud of what we do at Manor. Instead of providing straight lectures, we give students experiences that actually include doing art, science, math and literacy. In my methods course we mix in some art therapy, review art techniques, including having students view videos of infants, toddlers and preschoolers working with paint and clay. We also incorporate studio time where students work with acrylics or oils and clay to gain a sense of the importance of process art. In our science method course, ED214, students actually engage in science experiments that they can do with children. Often I’ll take photos to document their learning and then use a technology tool such as Hakku Deck, so they build an understanding of how they can share learning with others. In our child development course, ED210, students do a case study following a child for the semester, where they learn how to do authentic assessments. Field placements are the biggest challenge for us. Because our ECE students need a combination of night and day classes, scheduling is problematic. If they just do afternoon field placements, they’re limited in what they see, and 4-6 placements have to be before 3:00. Being a small program I can schedule the courses at times that work for them. We’re also currently working on a partnership with a 4-year institution that would allow our students to complete their bachelor’s degree right on Manor campus. This partnership would be an evening program and help address the needs of working students. The biggest challenge in PA as we move toward UPK is student teaching for certification. Working students are often not able to do 14 to 16 weeks of unpaid work or student teaching. One idea is a year-long residency model where you are taking courses and doing field work at same time.

The Gold Standard for ECE higher education (see box) is a great thing. How do we get more people in high ed on board? Having been a preschool teacher, El teacher, and program director for over 14 years, when I came to higher ed I was a little shocked at their lack of knowledge of what we really do. STARS has been around since 2002 but higher ed, which places a greater focus on K-4, is just now catching up to it. I believe it is important that those who implement teacher prep need to have some real experience working in ECE and/or continue to stay connected to the field. On the flip side, the 0-5 community is not really connected with K-4. Both sides have a disconnect. We need to sit in each other’s classrooms to know what’s going on, and to blend our expectations—around reading, math, and social/emotional skills.

When the state changed the certification to P-4, they threw handicapped out the window. How do we help with that? How do we help all parties involved understand that teaching needs to continue their education? We have to accept that, to be held seen as a profession, teachers have to find a way to increase their credentials. A lot of students have great fears about the Praxis/PAPA test. I think we’ve made it worse for them by asking them all the negative talk about the test. There’s not enough talk that tells students “You can do this.” How can the state help with the tuition, as they did with TEACH, or do some loan forgiveness for ECE teachers? What will allow teachers to get out of work to go to school? We need to find creative ways to give support, such as finding a way for veteran teachers get credit for experience, so they don’t have to start all over.

We really have to make sure that teachers in the early middle or part of their career are being teacher advocates, so whether they retire there is someone to replace them. How can we help teachers move into leadership outside the classroom? What kind of leadership opportunities do they have? If we’re going to increase credentials and accountability, we have to believe not only that obtaining their advance credentials is important but that we will support them as well. In addition, we need to have PD days where all centers close down get on the bus to Harrisburg to advocate for the field. Many dream board/brown/owners have already decided that this really does matter, but we need even more.
We all agreed that we wanted to do away with our old performance appraisal system, which was a checklist of core competencies with a rating scale. Instead, we wanted to engage in a more reflective process where each staff member would consider his or her work and create a portfolio with sources of evidence based on our newly embraced core values. The portfolio became a catalyst for important dialogue with the supervisor about the work that was meaningful and important to the staff member. In particular, each employee was able to share significant achievements or work that challenged them. In addition, we discussed opportunities for growth, reviewed last year’s goals and set new ones. Finally, each job description was discussed to determine if there was need for revision or additions.

This turned out to be a big improvement over our past practice! There was deep reflection and healthy conversation about areas of strength and achievement as well as areas where staff members needed additional support or more training— as the accompanying comments show. Goals were aligned with the goals of our strategic plan. We are looking forward to the next fiscal year where we can meet quarterly to review portfolios and engage in reflective supervision.

We hope that our experience might inspire you to keep your own portfolio as you prepare for your annual review. Or perhaps a program might choose to move to a more reflective performance appraisal system and use portfolios as a way to document meaningful work and learning.

**Peg Szczurek, Associate Director**

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**Tyrone Scott**

What if we started treating adults like children? Now, I am not advocating for mandatory nap times (although I am not opposed to voluntary ones). I am advocating for using what we know about assessment to be transferred to adults. How many staff performance reviews feel like tests? Did you wash your hands for twenty seconds each time? Did you have five types of art supplies available? As we all know, traditional assessment does not reliably show what an individual knows.

DVAEYC’s new portfolio-based system allows staff to share significant accomplishments and activities that might be missed in a traditional review. Also, when supervisors see what staff feels is important, they can more properly motivate staff and assess their overall management style. Although I believe my supervisors would agree that I have met all of my formal job requirements, this year I was able to focus on successes in my non-traditional marketing and advocacy work as well. How often do I get to formally discuss my Twitter account? Or my involvement in the entertainment field?

How often can you say that your social media made a difference in a tax vote?

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**Lisa Schultz**

As someone who works with NAEYC-accredited programs in developing administrative and classroom portfolios, I see the positive benefits of a portfolio in the assessment process. The development of a portfolio provides a guide for reflective practice for programs seeking NAEYC accreditation. It provides an opportunity for staff to tell the story of their program or classroom through documented evidence, to celebrate what they do well, and to reflect on their own practices.

I was excited when I first heard that we would be moving toward a portfolio system. Focusing only on annual appraisal forms can lead to misunderstanding and underappreciation of staff. As supervisors, portfolios provide us with an opportunity to have very open and detailed year-round discussion with staff. They encourage staff to highlight their work and provide evidence on how it supports DVAEYC’s mission and core values. This process gave staff a way to share what they were most proud of and helped them identify their strengths and areas for future development. It provided visibility and clarified accountability related to performance expectations that annual performance appraisals do not allow.

As an employee, I got to reflect on my work moving forward and to assess the role I have played in supporting DVAEYC’s mission. I believe this system has the potential to increase communication, accountability and performance.

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**Charlene Nolten**

I enjoyed the experience of constructing a portfolio. The opportunity really made me think about all I have done over the last year, how proud I am of what I’ve accomplished, and what I would love to make more time for. Because of the executive director transition, I used this chance to also look back on my tenure with DVAEYC, knowing that information would be helpful to Carol as well. What a fun time to be creative! Yes, it took longer than just checking off boxes on a performance review, but the end product says so much more about me and my work here.

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**Ashley Hanenik**

Change always brings uncertainty. So when the plan for individual portfolios was introduced in lieu of the traditional “met,” “not met” reviews, I wasn’t sure what to make of it. Would this be better, more beneficial, more challenging? What would be the end result? The answers only came as I actually sat down and began piecing mine together. I started in the usual way: collecting positive feedback from the year, glancing over previous goals, scouring my email to jog my memory of the last few months. I didn’t really get to the core of this project until I began to reflect on the facets of my day-to-day work. I dug deeper and deeper into the reasons why I work here and why I value the specific tasks that I do. Checking boxes doesn’t leave much room for reflection. It’s much more beneficial to celebrate accomplishments (big and small), and to review challenges to allow for growth.

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**Ta’Mora Jackson**

I found the portfolio review beneficial in many ways:

- By nature, I’m a very visual learner so the format allowed me to complete a self-assessment in a way that feels natural to me; it allowed me to visually see where I need to improve.
- Creativity was encouraged by giving suggested topics and tips for organization instead of cookie cutter themes or a rigid structure.
- Collaboration was fostered by scheduling an all staff day where the framework was discussed, then time was made for groups and individuals to meet, share and work on organizing portfolios.

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**Peg Szczurek, Associate Director**

**Tyrone Scott**

**Lisa Schultz**

**Charlene Nolten**

**Ashley Hanenik**

**Ta’Mora Jackson**
The word trauma is being thrown around the education field a lot these days. But what does it really mean? Webster defines trauma as “a very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems, usually for a long time.” Now this sounds pretty extreme, but in reality traumatic events are happening all the time. Understanding what trauma is, what it can cause, how it affects people, and how we can respond is at the root of engaging in trauma informed practice—and that understanding will help our children, our families and ourselves as well.

Hurt people hurt people. Everyone is bringing something to the table all day, every day, and so it is the responsibility of adults to create a safe and predictable, non-toxic space where they feel comfortable and safe. We also need to remember that trauma affects people differently; one person’s trauma may not be the same to someone else.

In a kindergarten classroom a couple of months ago, I noticed a boy sitting in the library by himself. This was a child who always came running over to say “hi” and was the leader of the classroom. I asked the teacher what was wrong and she brushed it off, saying he was just having “one of those days.” Because of my trauma training, I knew that I might not just be an “off” day. At clean up time, the child refused to clean up, threw the books around and began crying. This was very unlike him. The teacher was concerned but saw this behavior as disruptive and asked him not to throw the books, which just made him more upset. He and then made eye contact, and I asked if he would like to come to the art area while the rest of the class did circle time. He agreed. I put out some paper and crayons, sat down next to him, and began to color calmly. I did not question him or pressure him to do or say anything. I was just trying to be there as a caring person in a safe space. After a couple of weeks, the child no longer entered the classroom and was the leader of the classroom. I the teacher could recognize that there was an underlying event causing the child to have such strong reactions, and by doing so was able to help the child connect to internal familiar and find some solace. Accepting that things will not always go smoothly, and that traumatic things are going to affect children in our classrooms on a daily basis, will enable us to better assist them in becoming strong, confident and empathetic.

Handling trauma this way can be a struggle with everything else that is going on in a classroom! But being open to the idea that it can affect all of us is a big step forward.

I purchased my copy of The Emotional Life of the Toddler by Alicia Leiberman years ago as a textbook for a class called Human Development. I was so impressed with how thoroughly Leiberman covered the subject of the emotional mind, and was the leader of the classroom. I felt understood. She then drew and colored in a picture of his skateboard, put it in his cupboard to take home, and joined the end of circle time. By me taking time to care about what he was feeling, giving him space to feel those feelings, reflect and acknowledge them, he was able to process his strong emotions.

I talked with the teacher later about what had happened. She was floored. At first she thought it was silly to be upset over a skateboard, but she recognized that this was something important to him and she needed to validate those feelings. A couple of weeks later, another one of the children came into class not themselves. This time the teacher followed what I had modeled, giving the child a safe space and a caring person to be present with. The child worked through the feelings and was able to move through the day. The teacher could recognize that there was an underlying event causing the child to have such strong reactions, and by doing so was able to help the child connect to internal familiar and find some solace. Accepting that things will not always go smoothly, and that traumatic things are going to affect children in our classrooms on a daily basis, will enable us to better assist them in becoming strong, confident and empathetic.

As a psychologist, Leiberman is able to present information about toddler needs and parent reactions (the good and the less beneficial) alongside stories of specific toddlers she has worked with or observed. When I read the book as a student, I found many of the anecdotes funny, as I could recognize the behaviors of certain children in my life. In my second read, as a teacher, I found the book as a resource for parents, caregivers, and teachers. The book offers sections on relationships, temperament, separation anxiety, toilet training, discipline, and the importance of quality childcare.

Leiberman has this to say about boundaries:

“The list of prohibitions [for toddlers] is nobody’s fault. It is a part of the long and often tedious process of converting a toddler into a person who will gradually learn to live according to the values and rules of his culture. No matter how thoughtfully parents prepare the house or how tactfully they divert a child to acceptable pursuits, there are still many ‘no’s’ that need to be said fair and square. It is a small wander that the toddler (being a fast learner) also feels compelled to announce his personal list of ‘no’s,’ for the sake of fairness if nothing else.

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On Thursday, April 28th, 2016, friends of DVAEYC gathered in the Liberty Ballroom of the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown to celebrate early childhood education at the Champions for Young Children event. DVAEYC’s guest of honor was Chris Cashman, recently retired from Independence Blue Cross. Chris was a major supporter of the creation of Success By Six™ while serving on the Board of Directors of the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey. SB6 is one of the largest programs in the region dedicated to improving early learning environments, and DVAEYC has been a SB6 partner since its inception. For that reason, DVAEYC was proud to honor Chris as our 2016 Champion for Young Children!

The evening featured delicious food and drinks, a live jazz trio, and a fabulous silent auction. The program began with remarks from Patti Baxter, DVAEYC’s Board President, and Jill Michal, DVAEYC Board Member and representative of Independence Blue Cross, Champions for Young Children’s Presenting Sponsor. Trish Cashman from United Way GP&SNJ presented the award to her father, adding a special touch to the evening.

DVAEYC thanks all who celebrated with us—and a special thanks to our generous sponsors for supporting Champions for Young Children!