

**Leadership Pathways for Early Education:
Community Strategies to Enhance
Professional Development**

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for **Early Education:**
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**Caroline and Sigmund
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The Schott Center
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OCTOBER 2003

Introduction

In Massachusetts it is estimated that 82% of children ages three to five are enrolled in child care or early education programs.¹ For too many of these children, in Massachusetts and throughout the nation, the quality of child care they receive is less than adequate. Evaluations of many early childhood education programs in the U.S. showed that the quality of programs range from poor to mediocre. For example, one multi-state study reported that 40% of the infant rooms in child care centers were of such poor quality that they jeopardized children's health, safety, or development.²

Not only is high quality care difficult to find, it is equally difficult to afford.³ Full-day child care ranges from \$4,000 to \$12,000 per year per child. For a family of four with young children who earn less than \$25,000 a year the cost of child care is far beyond their resources.⁴

The value of high quality care to children is well documented. Longitudinal studies have consistently shown that the quality of early childhood education that children receive has an enduring effect on children's capacity to learn and on their well being in general.⁵ A study conducted by investigators at the University of North Carolina found that children in high quality child care demonstrated greater thinking and attention skills, greater mathematical ability, and fewer behavioral problems than that of children in lower quality care.⁶

Who is responsible for ensuring equity and access to high quality early education for all children?

What is the role of parents, teachers, and community residents in defining and advocating effective early childhood education policies?

How can every child in the Commonwealth have an opportunity for early education?

The Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation and The Schott Center for Public and Early Education join with families and researchers to ask these questions. Seeking answers, Schott has engaged in a number of strategic efforts to improve the quality of life for young children in the Commonwealth. One of Schott's primary objectives is to ensure the creation of universal, high quality, culturally appropriate early education of Massachusetts. To achieve this goal, Schott has supported leadership development projects, litigation to achieve funding equity, legislative remedies, and media and grassroots campaigns.

Through its efforts to solicit input from a wide variety of stakeholders, Schott recognized early in its work that many early childhood educators perceived that people of color were often unrepresented or underrepresented in policy discussions about children. Often these constituents expressed concern that they were not consulted at any stage of policy formulation. This was particularly disturbing when policies that directly affected them, their children and their communities were crafted without a full appreciation of their needs, wants and cultural and ethnic priorities. Given the growth of the Latino, Asian, and African American populations in Massachusetts', there is concern that the dialogue about quality has not been as inclusive as it must be.

To broaden efforts for quality early education former Schott president Greg Jobin-Leeds and program director Ruth Bowman convened a diverse group of educators, community residents and advocates in



1998 to grapple with the issues of community and culture in early education. A key outcome of these discussions was the creation of the *Leadership Pathways* initiative, a unique effort to facilitate and institutionalize community-based projects that would promote racial, ethnic, gender, and economic diversity in early education services. Schott concluded that investing in a pioneering endeavor that focused on developing leaders and advocates in communities of color would eventually lead to better quality early childhood education programs for all young children by placing new advocates at policy making tables.

From 1999 through 2002, the *Leadership Pathways* initiative included eight grantees from diverse communities. Each grantee designed and implemented their own set of strategies and ideas about how to develop, support and sustain new early childhood leaders. The group of *Leadership Pathways* grantees worked with a facilitator, the Wheelock College Institute on Leadership and Career Initiatives. Wheelock provided technical assistance and a learning community to enhance the programmatic efforts of *Leadership Pathways* grantees. With Wheelock, under the leadership of Cecilia Alvarado and Andrea Genser, the eight grantees found that they had much in common: the needs of young children were underserved in their communities, the providers of care needed support and a professional community, and the importance of culture as a key variable in efforts to mobilize, educate and develop early childhood leaders.

The following pages describe the grantees, their leadership projects, and lessons learned in this process.

Acorn Leadership Project

Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
Boston, Massachusetts

BOSTON CHINATOWN NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

The Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (BCNC) provides services to more than 4,000 children, youth and adults every year. BCNC's mission is to enrich and improve the quality of life for Boston's Asian American community by providing bilingual education, child care, cultural, social, and recreational programs. Implicit in its mission is the commitment to foster mutual understanding and respect for diverse cultures and ethnic groups.

Established in 1972, the Acorn Child Care Center was the first program of the BCNC. The center has provided bilingual Chinese/English child care since its inception. Most of the children in the program are from families with little or no English language speaking skills. Over 80% of Acorn's families are low income and from Chinese-speaking newcomer families. Acorn serves children from the age of 15 months through kindergarten, often providing the first link to American culture for these children and families.

THE ACORN LEADERSHIP PROJECT

BCNC used its *Leadership Pathways* grant to offer an array of professional development activities to 19 Acorn program staff to promote leadership. The project focused on the individual development of teachers as a first step in leadership development. The model was grounded in the belief that self-development would lead to leadership curiosity, engagement, and empowerment.

As a result of the *Leadership Pathways* grant, Acorn experimented with broadening the world-view of teachers and encouraging teachers' professional growth. The model had three components: mentoring Chinese teachers; promoting formal education and certification of teachers through tuition reimbursement, and English language support; and engaging residents and parents by using the center as a community resource. The mentoring component enhanced teacher's confidence, boosted morale, and created a supportive environment overall. Teachers began to see themselves as professionals who could make a greater impact on their communities and families. Their professional development activities ranged from becoming fluent in English and Chinese, becoming certified by the Office of Child Care Services, pursuing college degrees, and presenting workshops at major child care conferences.

"We have learned and have been able to prove that if and **when nurtured**, there is a **leadership potential that can flourish in every person**. Culture and individual personality traits play significant roles in shaping leadership styles, paces, and roles. Exploring our own personal and cultural beliefs and values as well as others is a starting place for processing the definition of the concept of leadership."

Hanna Gebretensae
Director, Acorn Child Care Center

Boston Family Childcare Network

The Child Care Project, Inc.
Dorchester, Massachusetts

THE CHILD CARE PROJECT, INC.

The Child Care Project (CCP) was founded in 1986 to increase the child care options for Latino families and provide support to Spanish-speaking women seeking licensure as family child care providers. Today, CCP serves a diverse group of family child care providers in various Boston neighborhoods. The Child Care Project staff offers individualized support and technical assistance to family providers to help them plan activities to enhance children's development. Through involvement in the CCP network and programs, providers are able to offer higher quality, more professional care to the families they serve. Central to CCP's philosophy is the belief that families need to be nurtured so that they can nurture their children. Provider training is designed to serve the family as a whole unit.

BOSTON FAMILY CHILDCARE NETWORK

CCP used its *Leadership Pathways* grant to support the Boston Family Childcare Network (BFCN) as an effort to organize family child care providers for policy action and decrease the sense of isolation among providers while promoting their professional development. Before advocacy was possible, the network had to create a unified voice by inviting and supporting opinionated and passionate providers to lead a group where they could learn the art of using their voices together. The Boston Family Childcare Network believed that potential leaders must first deal with issues relating to self and personal leadership confidence. A leader must first feel that she/he can make a difference before that difference is manifested. Often, early childhood leadership development must address gender inequities, a personal sense of lost opportunities, and overcoming the belief that the opinions of people of color would not be heard.

In the past, when family child care providers met to discuss important issues of quality care or other political discussions that affected early childhood education (e.g., rates for care and/or number of voucher slots), these discussions did not lead to organized action. The formation of BFCN gave a disconnected group of family child care providers the opportunity to explore their commonalities and learn the art and power of group advocacy.

As a result of the *Leadership Pathways* grant, there are 175 members of the Boston Family Childcare Network. BFCN hosts an annual family child care conference focused on leadership challenges and opportunities for diverse ethnic groups in the ECE field. In addition, 15 providers became actively involved in key early care and education policymaking groups that allowed them to successfully advocate for increased child care slots for providers and raised the awareness of their state legislators about key issues affecting family child care providers.

Child Care Grassroots Leadership Development Project

Coalition Against Poverty
Fall River/New Bedford, Massachusetts

COALITION AGAINST POVERTY

The Coalition Against Poverty (CAP) was established as a response to the increasing failure of public policy to benefit low-income people. CAP was formed in 1994 to organize low-income single mothers to oppose punitive welfare policies and work for increased opportunities. Using door-to-door outreach, CAP empowers low-income working mothers by developing vigorous public education and action campaigns for economic survival. CAP is convinced that individuals don't make change; large groups of interested people who are directly impacted make change. CAP believes that taking action to impact policy creates leaders. The focus of the organization is to build campaigns that change public policy affecting working families; child care is a major part of that mission. CAP develops leaders to affect and win campaigns.

"We are convinced that **masses of people** can be organized and brought into action. Our leaders and staff are dedicated low-income activists who are new to social activism. Our lead organizer and co-director is a former welfare recipient who rose up through the ranks, from volunteer to apprentice organizer to staff organizer."

Dan Gilbarg
Organizer, CAP

CHILD CARE GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

CAP used its *Leadership Pathways* grant to develop an intern program of "Apprentice Organizers." The majority of interns were African American women and Latinas living in public housing. By establishing this Apprentice Organizer program, CAP created a career ladder to grow leadership within its organization. Apprentices participated in hosting speak out neighborhood events, testifying at hearings, hosting political forums, conducting telephone calling campaigns to politicians regarding specific votes, and knocking on doors to enlist volunteers and/or advocates. The Child Care Grassroots Leadership Development Project sought to develop leaders of color in three ways:

- 1 Promoting advocacy among low-income women in the New Bedford area by recruiting and training and volunteers to be advocates on issues impacting the poor;
- 2 Addressing issues that low-income women have by advocating for enhancements to the support system of early childhood education; and
- 3 Creating a larger grassroots organization with more leaders to lobby for social justice causes as necessary.

As a result of the *Leadership Pathways* grant, CAP was able to influence major victories for mothers and their children including: increasing funding for affordable child care; increasing the state minimum wage; and winning a progressive \$1.2 billion tax package in 2002. The Apprentice Organizer program produced 15 interns over the three years.

Child Care Leadership Development

Viet-AID and Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses, Inc.
Dorchester, Massachusetts

VIET-AID AND FEDERATED DORCHESTER NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSES, INC.

Viet-AID, a community development corporation founded by Vietnamese refugees and immigrants along with the Dorchester Federated Neighborhood House, a group of community settlement houses, collaborated to develop Vietnamese leadership in child care.

CHILD CARE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CCLP used its *Leadership Pathways* grant to create a vehicle for Vietnamese parents to be involved in developing their own child care center, hire staff, and develop curriculum integrating Vietnamese values with American child development practices. The Child Care Leadership Development project was designed to act as a catalyst for the community to become more interested in how individuals could have an impact on their communities.

The success of the child care center in the Vietnamese community was essential to its acceptance and led to new levels of leadership. The approach taken was to:

- 1 Develop community participation in the establishment of a bilingual and bicultural child care center to serve the growing needs of the Vietnamese community in Boston.
- 2 Empower members of the Vietnamese community to lead, operate, and manage the first child care center of its kind nationally.
- 3 Develop a forum where Vietnamese parents participated in developing programs, curricula, and policies that shape the lives of their children.

As a result of *Leadership Pathways*, the first child care center in the United States with Vietnamese leadership was built and operated, serving forty children daily. Nearly thirty local residents and parents formed a policy council that designed a developmentally appropriate and culturally sensitive curriculum and helped to determine the overall direction of the center.

"In Vietnamese, the 'Child Care Leadership Development' project translates into 'Creating a Parent Voice in Early Care.' This project allowed the community to see the **direct benefit of quality child care and community activism.**"

Long Nguyen
Director, Viet-Aid

Latino Family Child Care Provider Association

Spanish American Union
Springfield, Massachusetts

SPANISH AMERICAN UNION

The mission of the Spanish American Union (SAU) is to promote the health and well-being of participants through empowerment education programs to foster individual, community, and institutional growth. SAU was established in 1968 to respond to a housing shortage created by the construction of highway I-91. SAU's current focus is to find systemic solutions to problems facing communities of color.

In 1997, the Spanish American Union conducted a focus group and decided there was a need for Latino providers to form an organization. SAU assisted in the creation of the Latino Family Child Care Providers Association (LFCCPA).

LATINO FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER ASSOCIATION

SAU used their *Leadership Pathways* grant to improve the professional development opportunities available to Spanish-speaking providers. The LFCCPA conducted planning meetings with the Office for Child Care Services, Springfield Technical College, Holyoke Community College, Springfield Public School Department, and the Springfield Enrichment Team. The goal of the meetings was to engage these organizations to actively meet the training and educational needs of the Latino child care community. The developmental leadership steps for LFCCPA were:

- 1 Awareness of self and of community needs
- 2 Participate in community groups and/or networks
- 3 Secure increased knowledge and skills
- 4 Advance within the early childhood field
- 5 Advocate for community needs within the mainstream

The LFCCPA group found forming allies in leadership positions in early childhood education to be a challenging and time-consuming task that required reflection and strategic thinking. As a result of this *Leadership Pathways* grant, a 29-credit early care and education certificate in Spanish was offered in Western Massachusetts. Nearly 100 Spanish-speaking child care providers have earned their certificates with many in school pursuing higher degrees.

“Leadership must be linked to purpose and action. It is a worldview that is central to one’s life purpose. Leadership is the ability to weave strands of commonality within a community; raw ‘elbow power’ at critical mainstream tables of authority and aligning the heart and mind while overcoming injustices that exist in structures of power.”

*Maria Morales-Loebl
Executive Director,
Spanish American Union*

The Massachusetts Leadership Empowerment Action Project

Hosted by the Child Care Resource Center, Inc.
Cambridge, Massachusetts

THE CHILD CARE RESOURCE CENTER, INC.

The Child Care Resource Center, Inc. (CCRC) was founded in 1971 by a group of mothers who wanted to ensure that reliable information about quality, affordable child care was made available to all parents who needed it. Today, CCRC serves more than 20,000 families and 2,000 child care providers each year throughout Massachusetts.

MASSLEAP

The *Leadership Pathways* grant was used to support the Massachusetts Leadership Empowerment Action Project (LEAP). MassLEAP was created in 1996 by a collaborative of longtime activists and educators and is housed at CCRC.

MassLEAP seeks to strengthen the movement committed to improved and expanded early education and care for families by developing leadership that mirrors the full diversity of the workers in the field and the families they serve. MassLEAP was developed in response to the need for more “front line” professionals to take leadership positions in the movement to improve compensation and the quality of early care and education in this state. LEAP founders recognized the need for unifying professional development initiatives and strategies as well as a strong advocacy network for providers.

This *Leadership Pathways* project focused on four goals:

- 1 Reduce isolation among providers by creating a sustainable network
- 2 Deliver the leadership development courses to promote high quality professional development and community action projects
- 3 Create a forum for the child care workforce to assess community needs and assets in Massachusetts
- 4 Strengthen the statewide advocacy network in communities for early childhood issues and the promotion of universally accessible high quality early care and education

As a result of this *Leadership Pathways* grant, MassLEAP implemented two college-level, 45-credit leadership development courses: the introductory LEAP I and the more advanced LEAP II for early childhood educators. Over 300 early childhood educators participated in LEAP courses during *Leadership Pathways*. LEAP graduates are now leaders of early childhood educational centers and are actively engaged in local, state and federal child and family policy issues.

“For me, taking LEAP was like finding a **delicious pool of water in a very dry desert**. Each week I sat in a class of people with similar goals and visions. I felt a new sense of commonality and unity with other in the field. While we were all at different levels of leadership, we were all wanting to see and be part of change. LEAP has given me the energy to continue working in the classroom and the tools to empower children and their families.”

*Jenn Guptill
early childhood educator and
LEAP graduate*

Partnerships in Diversity

The Greater Lawrence Community Action Council
Lawrence, Massachusetts

THE GREATER LAWRENCE COMMUNITY ACTION COUNCIL

The Greater Lawrence Community Action Council (GLCAC) is a private, non-profit agency designated as the official federal and state anti-poverty agency for the greater Lawrence area. Since 1965, GLCAC has been promoting the improvement of community life through a comprehensive system of services in education, training, support and resources. GLCAC's director was a lead member of a statewide advocacy initiative among directors of community partnerships. This initiative, the Community Partnerships for Children Council (CPC), was primarily comprised of CEO's of various child care organizations in the greater Lawrence area, but was not a diverse group. Given that most of the children in the needing care in Lawrence were Latino, GLCAC believed that the Council should become more representative of the children it was serving.

"Leadership is doing more than the minimum and surpassing expectations. The ability to form partnerships within the community at large is also a key to leadership. Leadership is situational: one can lead one's family, neighborhood, or peers. Leadership can be noisy or quiet."

Julie Tetreault
Director, Greater Lawrence
Community Action Council

PARTNERSHIPS IN DIVERSITY

GLCAC used their *Leadership Pathways* grant to create a project that would diversify early child leadership at the local and state level. The Partnerships in Diversity project had three objectives:

- 1 Increase the diversity on the Community Partnership for Children's Council.
- 2 Develop leadership skills in participants that would assist them in promoting early care and education to legislative and community groups; and
- 3 Encourage participation on local and state advocacy boards and councils.

As a result of the *Leadership Pathways* grant, the Community Partnership for Children's Council grew to include seven Latino members and the chairwoman was a Spanish speaker. Partnerships in Diversity also conducted broad outreach to over 500 Latino family child care providers in Lawrence and collaborated with local community colleges to offer credit early childhood courses in Spanish.

Spirit in Leadership

Massachusetts School-Age Coalition
& Women's Theological Center
Jamaica Plain & Wellesley, Massachusetts

MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL-AGE COALITION & WOMEN'S THEOLOGICAL CENTER

The Spirit in Leadership Program (SIL) was a joint collaboration of the Massachusetts School-Age Coalition (MSAC) and the Women's Theological Center (WTC). Spirit in Leadership grew out of an informal group including WTC staff and members and MSAC's Executive Director, designed to explore the meaning of spiritual leadership their work. SIL was built on the foundation of WTC's experience developing programs that empower women around liberation movements and social justice issues and MSAC's expertise in developing statewide networks of school-age providers and organizations.

SPIRIT IN LEADERSHIP

The *Leadership Pathways* grant was used to foster in school age care providers of color the ability to express leadership within their program and communities, and to create caring and supportive environments for co-workers, children and families. The program had several goals including:

- 1 Broadening participants' view of leadership and of themselves as leaders;
- 2 Inspiring participants to be more fully engaged in the workplace; and
- 3 Helping school-age care providers identify and address racism and systemic oppression within their agencies.

SIL's overall goal was to increase the leadership of people of color in the school-age field by transforming individual world-views about self. The collaboration sought to inspire spiritual leadership. Activities included: Creating "circles" of people of color who met once a month for day long meetings/workshops; participating in issue-specific leadership workshops that culminated in projects; and conducting dialogues with providers to understand how school-age care work was understood in their communities and how it affected their lives.

As a result of the *Leadership Pathways* grant, more than 50 people participated in the intensive SIL program and became engaged in improving the conditions of after-school and out-of school time care within their communities.

"Spirit in Leadership is a collaborative project to provide people of color who are school-age providers with a support network, leadership skills, and a process for deep personal, spiritual, and professional growth as well as organizational and community transformation."

**Donna Bivens and
Jude Goldman**
SIL Directors

Toward **INCLUSIVE** Leadership

The *Leadership Pathways* experience highlighted several areas instructive for organizations involved in developing leadership in diverse communities.

Who is responsible for ensuring equity and access to high quality early education for all children?

A lesson from *Leadership Pathways* is that **LEADERS EMERGE FROM MANY ROLES**. The eight communities involved in this project believe that public policy advocacy is one type of leadership. They assert that other forms of leadership should also be valued: classroom leadership, community issue leadership, and self-development. Cultural differences in communities and individuals often value a range of leadership styles that must be accounted for in leadership development programs. It takes different types of leaders to support diverse community needs.

What is the role of parents, teachers, and community residents in defining and advocating effective early childhood education policies?

Leadership Pathways engaged leaders from all of these categories to make a difference in the lives of children. The important factor seemed to be the belief and preference that **AUTHENTIC LEADERS ARE CONNECTED TO THEIR COMMUNITIES**. While many of the grantee organizations wanted to impact public policy for the larger society, many believed it was equally, or even more, important to have leaders address needs inside their own communities. Important concerns were raised about losing the strongest leaders to established organizations or networks. The ability to influence mainstream policy while at the same time reducing the effect of “creaming” leaders from culturally and ethnically diverse communities is of critical concern. Often leadership is best flexed as communities cultivate their own policy-making tables.



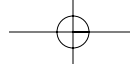
How can every child in the Commonwealth have an opportunity for early education?

In this regard, two lessons emerge from *Leadership Pathways*. The first is that **THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT MATTERS**. Developing and sustaining leadership often means working within the context of organizations that may be financially fragile or relatively inexperienced. Several of the *Leadership Pathways* grantees grappled with defining and maintaining their focus within this difficult context. The organizations that were at critical stages in their level of maturity and stability during the course of *Leadership Pathways* faced additional programmatic challenges. In several locations, there was an evident struggle to find and retain staff members who understood the complexities of nurturing new leaders of color. In fact, the ability of organizations to continue programs with ongoing staff attrition remains a serious issue. Still, these organizational sites provided a high level of engagement and comfort to many of their participants.

The second lesson learned from this initiative is that **CULTURE MATTERS**. Leadership in the early childhood field is confounded by the factors of race, economics, and gender, as well as challenges unique

to the profession.⁸ Support and appropriate assistance from established leaders is critical. Each *Leadership Pathways* project engaged at least one leader who consistently mentored, insisted upon, and cajoled others to take leadership roles. Much of this effort involved assisting potential leaders to obtain increased experience, education, financial stability, and confidence.

One of the initiative's early lessons was that pathways to leadership are partially determined by culture. Each of the eight program models underscored the notion that leadership is a relational process, not solely a personal characteristic. Leadership is or should be distributed equally among members of a group rather than viewed as a unique quality possessed by a few individuals. The lessons learned from the eight leadership models illustrate group-orientation and in some ways challenge traditional models of leadership development.



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The Schott Foundation and The Schott Center congratulate the *Leadership Pathways* participants on their achievements. By sharing their stories, we hope to inspire others to make a difference in the lives of all children. Those interested in supporting or learning more about Schott's current leadership development should contact the Schott office at 617-876-7700 or educate@schottfoundation.org.

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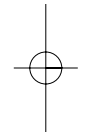
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Special thanks for technical assistance to Joey Merrill, JM Consulting Inc.

