

# Schott Fellowship News

The Schott Fellowship in Early Care and Education  
Be an Architect of Change

## Architects of Change

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## New Child Care Voucher Report

In 2005, under the leadership of the Bessie Tarrt Wilson Children's Foundation, the Massachusetts child care voucher study found many challenges in the subsidy care system. Due to the prevalence of short term vouchers, many children were subjected to discontinuous unstable care. The average length of a given voucher was 114 days. Families experienced the system as burdensome, confusing and penalizing. From a financial and management perspective, centers were often unable to fill slots for children who were terminated. Parent choice of an early care and education program was limited. (To read the original voucher study online written by Nancy Marshall, Kathy Modigliani, Marta Rosa and Valora Washington, go to [www.schottfellowship.org/files/publications/MassachusettsChildCareStudyReport.pdf](http://www.schottfellowship.org/files/publications/MassachusettsChildCareStudyReport.pdf).)

As a result of advocacy and discussion, effective November 2006, Massachusetts extended the voucher certification period to one year in many cases. The next question asked is: How well is this new policy being implemented?

To find out, a follow-up study by the BTWCF was recently conducted. It was found that, on average, vouchers are now 25 days longer. One third of center directors believe that the gap between the end of one voucher and the renewal of the voucher has improved. There was also a dramatic drop in the termination/interruption rate---from 30 percent in 2005 to 13 percent in 2007. (To read the rest of this study online written by Nancy Marshall and Valora Washington, go to [www.schottfellowship.org/files/publications/MassachusettsChildCareVoucherStudyPhaseII.pdf](http://www.schottfellowship.org/files/publications/MassachusettsChildCareVoucherStudyPhaseII.pdf).)

The results reported suggest that the extension of the voucher certification is having its intended impact for children, families and providers, thereby promoting continuity of care for children.

## Three Appointed to the Board of Early Education and Care

On May 13, 2008, the appointments of Lynson Beaulieu, Director of Programs and Strategic Leadership at the Schott Foundation for Public Education; Orlando Isaza, Senior Program Officer at the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts; and Mary Pat Messmer, Executive Director of the Cape Cod Child Development Program were made to the board. Massachusetts is the first state to have a Department of Early Education and Care to coordinate education and human services focused on youth.

## 2009 Schott Fellowship Information

Applications for the 2009 Schott Fellowship will be posted at [www.schottfellowship.org](http://www.schottfellowship.org) on June 1, 2008. Application deadline is Sept 15, 2008. The Fellowship year runs from January 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009.

The 2009 Schott Fellowship topics are as follows:

1. Family Childcare
2. Children, Families, Race, and Culture
3. Young Children and Disabilities
4. Workforce Issues in Early Care and Education
5. Young Children in Public Schools
6. Policy Issues Related to Regionalization (i.e. Western Mass, Cape Cod)

## Recruiting Principal Fellows

Now accepting applications for the 2008-2009 Principals' Fellowship. Boston Public School principals that serve pre-kindergarten children are eligible. Application deadline is June 13, 2008.

For more information, contact Valora Washington at 617-873-0678 or Jason Sachs at 617-635-9071. Applications are now available at [www.schottfellowship.org](http://www.schottfellowship.org).

## Network News

**Valora Washington** and **Pamela Holmes** were featured in the Somerville News. The article can be found at <http://www.wickedlocal.com/somerville/news/education/x299934397/Talking-about-getting-school-ready>

**Emily Koester**, **Kay Lisseck** and **Francia Wisnewski** participated in organizing and leading the Western Massachusetts Early Childhood leadership Institute held on May 8, 2008 at the Hotel Northampton. 120 leaders from four counties attended the event.

**Yasmina Vinci** wrote a letter to the Boston Globe. It can be found at [www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial\\_opinion/letters/articles/2008/04/26/the\\_gender\\_gap/](http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/letters/articles/2008/04/26/the_gender_gap/)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>Now</b>	<b>Application for 2008-2009 Principals' Fellowship available at <a href="http://schottfellowship.org">schottfellowship.org</a></b>	
<b>May 29-30</b>	<b>Principals' Fellowship site visit to Newark, NJ</b>	
<b>June 1</b>	<b>Application for 2009 Schott Fellowship posted on <a href="http://schottfellowship.org">schottfellowship.org</a></b>	
<b>June 4</b>	<b>9:30 to 11:30</b>	<b>Alumni co-chair meeting</b>
<b>June 5</b>	<b>10:00 to 4:00</b>	<b>Schott Fellowship Meeting</b>
<b>June 27</b>	<b>11:30</b>	<b>Principals' Fellowship Meeting with Boston Superintendent</b>

## Federal News

S. 2980 Starting Early, Starting Right Act - The bill, started by Senator Robert Casey (D-PA), is based largely off the Child Care Vision statement that was created by ten national organizations, which was presented at NACCRRRA's 2008 Symposium. The legislation would amend the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to improve access to high-quality early learning and child care for low income children and working families.

The National Conference of State Legislatures created a new database that tracks related early care and education legislation from the 2008 session. Issues include child care and child care financing, early childhood services, pre-kindergarten, professional development, home visiting, infants and toddlers, and financing early education. For more info: [www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/ECELD.cfm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/ECELD.cfm).

### For Principal Fellows Only

- Site visit to Newark, NJ Public Schools will be on May 30, 2008. The group will leave on May 29, 2008 and stay in Newark overnight. Transportation will be provided.
- Meeting with Boston Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Carol Johnson will be on June 27, 2008 at 11:00 AM at 26 Court Street, Boston. An end of the year celebration will immediately follow.

### One Fellow's Opinion

Editor's note: We are pleased to inaugurate this column on the views and work of people in our network. If you would like to submit an article, please contact our office.

## The Massachusetts Family Network – Envisioning a System of Universal Support for Infants, Toddlers and Their Families

Kitt Cox

[Author's note – at the time this piece was written, the Massachusetts Family Network was once again facing the uncertainty posed by its annual odyssey through the legislative funding process, the “Achilles heel” of a program successfully serving about 24,000 families on a budget of just under 5.4 million dollars]

As a 2006 Schott Fellow, I was presented with the opportunity to research and make recommendations regarding the Commonwealth's public policies for infants, toddlers and their families. Our policy paper, *Everybody's Baby*, cited the research about the importance of strong, healthy families and positive early learning experiences for young children. We called for the creation of a comprehensive system of education, care and support, as well as the creation of an EEC position to champion issues of infants and toddlers.

In assessing what *is* working for babies and their families, we included the program I work with, the Massachusetts Family Network (MFN). Our work and understanding benefited from the testimony of my MFN colleague Jenn Kapuscik before the Joint Education Committee.

In her remarks before the legislators, Jenn highlighted MFN's vital role in supporting families across the state.

*“It is my hope that the Massachusetts early education and care system envisioned in this legislation will ultimately provide a universal continuum of support for children and families from birth to school age, in the home, in the community, and in formal service settings.*

*Children's learning begins at birth and their optimal development depends on many factors, particularly a healthy home and community environment, consistent care giving, and exposure (Continued on page 4)*

## Other Interesting Events Around Massachusetts

- The Strengthening Families Initiative, presented by Judy Langford, will be held on Thursday, May 29, 2008 from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM at the Mass. Convention and Exhibition Center, South Boston. For more information or to RSVP, contact Denise Rosa at the Children's Trust Fund at 617-727-8957 ex 8742.
- United Way presents "Pathways to Nurturing Children: Enhancing Organizational Focus on Professional Development" on Wednesday, June 4, 2008 from 8:45 AM to 12:00 PM, at 51 Sleeper Street, 1st Floor, Boston. For more information, contact Geetha Pai at 617-624-8104.
- Harvard Graduate School of Education presents "Pre-K to 3 Education: Promoting Early Success" November 13-15, 2008. To register online, visit [www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/ppe).
- "A Study of the Massachusetts Child Care Voucher System: Impact on Children, Families, Providers, and Resource and Referral Agencies" was published in Families in Society's April-June 2008 issue (Volume 89, No.2). The article can be found on page 202-207 under the section "Welfare, Poverty and the Working Poor". The study was written by Valora Washington and Mary Reed.

*(Continued from page 3)*

*to developmentally appropriate learning opportunities. Children who lack these things to any degree are likely to enter preschool or kindergarten behind their age peers and will often not be able to catch up, even in the best of settings. The Massachusetts Family Network (MFN) program was established in 1994 under the Education Reform Act to help ensure that parents have the resources to supply their children with the essentials for healthy development.*

*Building networks of community agencies the MFN initiative seeks to provide a system of outreach, education, and support for parents of young children that can extend the reach of services and reduce duplication of efforts. These programs are universally accessible in the communities they serve. Each MFN program is open to all families and works to reach out to underserved, isolated, and hard to reach families in particular. For many families, the MFN is a bridge to early childhood care and education programs and other services, as well as a source of ongoing support for creating strong parent-child relationships and building community among families.*

*MFN programs are based upon the principle that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. Consistent with established principles for family support services, MFN programs are designed to build on parents' and children's strengths, rather than focusing only on deficits or problems. This approach builds competence and contributes to resiliency, characteristics which research has correlated with successful outcomes for children and adults.*

*Since its inception, the MFN initiative has grown from ten to 42 sites serving 164 communities, but funding limitations have prevented the initiative from reaching all cities and towns. Building a system of support for families and children that begins at birth is a complicated and challenging task, but in the communities where MFNs have been established we have seen improvements in coordination among service providers, increased engagement of families in beneficial services earlier in children's lives, the development of advocacy and leadership skills among parent participants, and developmental gains for children themselves."*

Jenn recently left her MFN position to carry on other work in our communities. She left those of us working on policies to support babies and their families with a blueprint for how we might ultimately provide an important element in creating a universal continuum of support for children and families. The members of the Schott Fellowship, with its diverse leadership connected to communities, are in a unique position to promote a system such the Massachusetts Family Network for all families in the state. I urge you to advocate making this vision a reality.