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# The CAYL Principals Fellowship In Early Care and Education

## Evaluation Final Report

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## REFLECTIONS ON THE BARR PRINCIPALS FELLOWSHIP

At The CAYL Institute, we ask our Fellows to become "Architects of Change." As architects, we advise them to **analyze** their circumstances, **advance** their cause, **act** with courage, and **accelerate** the course of change.

Throughout this report we frequently refer to these stories and approaches. We appreciate the honest and forthright experiences of these change-agents, especially when they took risks by speaking their truth. All participants were promised confidentiality in exchange for their frank reflections. Therefore, we intentionally do not identify them and use pseudonyms instead of real names, unless we have been granted specific permission to use their real names.

The following are written comments provided to us by participants:

### **Vision & Strategy:**

*"There's a need for professional learning community among Principals; the only time I can do this now is at (the CAYL Institute). It's how to bring talented people together in a very professional way. Having access to experts is an amazing opportunity. At (the CAYL Institute) I can go to experts and bounce ideas. I can't do that with the district; those people are my bosses. I can't put a price on [my Fellowship experience]."*

*"The Fellowship has continued to inspire and affirm my leadership skills as well as provide unlimited opportunities for me to network with Elementary and other Early Educator Leaders throughout the state and nation (The Second Annual CAYL Institute National Conference for Elementary Principals.) I also have used much of the researched based ideas/strategies to inform my discussions during grade level Common Planning Team (CPT) Meetings with staff."*

*"CAYL has changed my thinking about educating young children for my life time. This knowledge affects all my relationships personal and otherwise. I feel comfortable and confident in any setting saying what needs to happen to support young children and their families. I am now working on a parent advocacy program linked to education and political action."*

*"I think CAYL has offered us a place to come together to advocate and discuss the needs of the very young. It's difficult to measure how much each Principal has gained, but it has had an impact on hundreds of children and in the quality of Early Childhood programs in Boston Public Schools."*

### **Policy & Perspective**

*"As I have learned more about what students needs I have become more involved in discussions in the district, pushing for the accreditation of early childhood programs."*

*"This year I have advocated for developmentally appropriate practices in all areas and educated the others in the district on the differences between the grade levels."*

### **Practice & Pedagogy**

*“Our programs are much more student centered than before. We still struggle to trust that students will learn when given the materials and opportunities to explore on their own.”*

*“I met with teachers and educators at the beginning of the school year, then met with teachers during weekly meetings and after-school professional development sessions to discuss specific strategies regarding classroom environments that support independent learning for students as well as how to operationalize a stimulating high quality developmentally appropriate practice with academic rigor that is embedded in a culturally relevant, responsive and sensitive curriculum.”*

### **Supervision**

*“The opportunity to visit other schools, discuss observations, and go to the early childhood conference has expanded my understanding of what are developmentally appropriate practices.”*

*“We have provided Professional Development hours (10-12) with a focus on Developmentally Appropriate Practice for all students in grades K1 through grade 3. Also, we have done annual school wide units i.e., Families and Relationships, Black History Program, Science Exposition and Multicultural Performance and Celebration with a DAP focus for all grades.”*

### **Family & Community**

*“The Fellowship has benefitted my students because after each meeting I presented new ideas to my teachers in staff developments that we put into place. It also gave me the support of other Principals of young children.”*

*“I have joined two neighborhood committees poised for changing the way families and the community provides resources for young children and youth. I am creating civic advocacy training opportunities for my families. I am planning to position my school to offer a more cohesive strand of public education.”*

*“CAYL was a very safe community where we worked together and could try new ideas and see if they were good and defensible- It was safe to take risks. Having a trusting community and a place to share experiences and innovative ideas is rare for principals. It is always special to have something like this- CAYL was exceptional- and we were exceptionally comfortable in pulling together.... we hung in there and were very supportive of each other – we still make phone calls and email when things come up – the learning community was really something – trips for learning together, building a learning community of principals... this is too rare and with CAYL we had many valuable lessons.”*

## ABOUT THE CAYL INSTITUTE AND THIS REPORT

*“There is an eloquence in true enthusiasm.”*  
-Edgar Allen Poe

The CAYL Institute is about change and change makers- about people and a profession with an extraordinary capacity.

The CAYL Institute also recognizes the obstacles to change: wavering courage, giant challenges, and uncertain responses when our colleagues feel the weighty burdens of feeling intimidated, negated, or isolated. We work to offer them hope and strategies so that they can be Architects of Change.

In more than three decades of working with early educators, we have certainly heard our colleagues describe many obstacles giants in their midst. We have had the privilege of participating in intimate, trusted and focused dialog with thousands of early educators. Through these conversations, we have heard early educators define their dreams, their hopes and their fears for themselves and for the children and families to whom they are dedicated. Too often the joy of being in the company of children is accompanied by sorrows of isolation, intimidation and negation. These weights pervade the individual’s daily work and entire being as the early educator is typically poorly paid, uncelebrated, and vulnerable. Worse, they often feel that they cannot do what they “know” is “right” because it is not popular or safe or affordable or valued in our achievement-test driven society.

The CAYL Principals Fellowship in Early Care and Education is designed to support, encourage, and empower Principals who are working with our youngest children. Following five years of efforts, it is clear that early educators are making progress, building momentum, and taking a stance to advance the field and support young children and their families. The Fellowship has increased the awareness, knowledge, skills and confidence elementary school Principals to lead their schools and school districts to develop more appropriate learning environments for young children that starts them on a proven path towards educational success.

There are many excellent analyses of the challenges facing young children and the early care and education field. Valora Washington with her colleague, Stacie Goffin, struck a chord with their publication of one such analysis, *Ready or Not: Leadership Choices in Early Care and Education*.<sup>1</sup> Goffin and Washington noted the irony of a field whose knowledge base about how to care for and educate young children effectively has exploded, yet we tolerate a “performance gap” as that knowledge is not applied to settings with all children. A similar irony rests in acknowledging the strength of advocacy in helping the public understand the promise of preschool, yet we face a growing “credibility gap” as early educators cannot fulfill the promises with existing resources. The field’s ability to address these ironies is hampered by its internal fractures and tendency to rely on lofty principles to justify its work. Goffin and Washington warn

the field of early care and education to act with urgency to better define its purpose, identity and responsibilities. This “adaptive work”<sup>iii</sup> is necessary to counterbalance the prevailing strength of external influences on the field—influences that too often seem like Goliath pressing against the field’s ethical principles and educational traditions.

“But how do we get started?” is perhaps the most frequent dilemma expressed by early educators in response to the call for change. While in agreement with the idea that we face adaptive challenges, early educators press us for examples and strategies that will encourage and guide their daily work. To the individual practitioner, the challenge feels Goliathian with few discernible pathways.

Recognizing the quest for courage and community in so many of her colleagues, Valora Washington established the CAYL Institute in 2004 for the purpose of supporting and directing early care and education leaders to be “architects of change.” Intending to organize, equip and empower people to create change on behalf of children, CAYL brings disparate parts of the field together to create solutions to the everyday challenges of working as an early educator. CAYL’s approach immerses participants in constructive active learning experiences, typically outside of one’s comfort zone, based on the idea that innovation is not going to happen by seminars, training or workshops without engagement with the real world. CAYL fosters collegial debate, cooperation and coordination in the belief that the field will flourish when we early educators can be proactive in defining our own truths and proactively seek appropriate solutions.<sup>iii</sup>

This is a report about change and change makers.

This is a report about obstacles to change.

And, this is also a report about *how* to accomplish change, *how* to make a difference, and *how* to take action.

Education is the foundation of all other professions, and of our civil society. We can all be proud of the accomplishments of our public education system<sup>iv</sup> and for the ways in which it has served to transform and energize our society. We must help early care and education services to be understood as part of that system, even when those services are not located in a “school.” Now we are in desperate need of a public conversation about what counts in education, especially early education from the youngest years of life ...and we should decide how we will measure what counts, and not just count what is easy to measure.

We are motivated by our dedication to help all young children succeed *and* to advance the field of early care and education. Therefore, we intend to continue CAYL’s efforts to help others *analyze, advance, act upon and accelerate the pace of change in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are most grateful to the 29 Boston Principals who have participated in the CAYL Principals Fellowship in Early Care and Education since 2006. These educational leaders have worked diligently and constructively to advance early care and learning opportunities for children and their families. As a result of their work, we have conceptualized a way of thinking about the work as an asymmetrical conflict, and learned lessons about how they are effective. These lessons are presented in this report.

In addition to these extraordinary Principals, we would like to thank Kim Haskins, Senior Program Officer at the Barr Foundation, for her extraordinary and steadfast leadership with CAYL over many years.

We are also especially grateful to the CAYL staff and consultants who produced the Fellowship series and provided support to the Fellows:

Kate Amel- CAYL Associate Manager of Programs and Operations

Brenda Gadson- strategic thinker and formidable executive who has worked with CAYL since 2008

Mary Limerick- CAYL Administrative Assistant

Finally, we extend our thanks to the Barr Foundation; without their generous support and commitment this Fellowship would not have been possible.

## OVERVIEW OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document presents:

- Information about the Boston Principals Fellowship from 2006-2011;
- Information about the "architects of change" pathway: analyze, advance, act and accelerate; *and*
- Samples of the work of Principals in Boston as they build momentum and take a stance to advance the field and improve the lives of young children.

We hope that you find this sampling of stories useful as you consider ways in which you can work for your children and for our profession.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valora Washington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Valora Washington, PhD  
President  
The CAYL Institute

## INTRODUCTION

### *Why is there a Fellowship for Principals in Boston?*

**Elementary school Principals are more involved in the lives of young children more now than ever before.** As Massachusetts moves towards a system of universal preschool, attention must be given to the essential elements of quality that will promote educational excellence.

**The enrollment of pre-kindergarten (pre-K) children Boston Public Schools is growing.** Boston Public Schools has expanded their early childhood programs significantly. Currently, Boston Public Schools offers Kindergarten 1 or K1 in 85% of elementary schools<sup>v</sup> and offers more than 2,400 for 4 year olds in the district.<sup>vi</sup> BPS also implemented universal math and literacy programs for all K1 programs that include professional developments for teacher and coaching.<sup>vii</sup>

**There is a greater public awareness that learning and brain development begin at birth.** Early care and education has evolved from a relatively invisible enterprise to a field on the cusp of being recognized as providing a public good for all children. The early years are now understood as being learning years that can change the life trajectories of children and families while fueling a state's economic growth.

An explosion of research in neuroscience and other developmental sciences shows us that the basic architecture of a child's brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues through adulthood. Like the construction of a home, the building process begins with laying the foundation, framing the rooms and wiring the electrical system in a predictable sequence. Early experiences literally shape how the brain gets built. A strong foundation in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes. A weak one will require remedial education, clinical treatment or other interventions that are less effective and more costly than providing crucial brain building interactions early in life.

The interactive influences of a child's genes and a child's experiences shape brain development. The active ingredient is the "serve and return" relationships with the adult caregivers in the family, community and care and education program. Like the process of serve and return in games such as tennis and volleyball, young children naturally reach out for interaction. These activities actually "wire" the brain by creating connections. Healthy brain building is fostered when adults respond and the interaction goes back and forth, much like a game of tennis.

Chronic stressful conditions such as extreme poverty, abuse or severe maternal depression--what scientists now call "toxic stress" -- disrupt the architecture of the developing brain. This can lead to lifelong difficulties in learning, memory and self-regulation. The neurological response to toxic stress never goes away, with costly consequences for both children and society. When you understand the sequence and process by which brains are built, it's easy to understand why it's wiser to start every child out strong. Trying to change behavior or build new skills on a weak foundation requires greater effort and is less effective than providing brain building interactions and environments early in life.

### **Earlier focus on learning**

As Principals seek to improve third and fourth-grade test scores that are mandated in Massachusetts, there has become an increased awareness and realizations that elementary schools need to strengthen their focus on learning in the earliest grades. Most Principals have been formally trained to teach and support the higher-grade levels, and many are not aware of the history, strength, and complexities in the early childhood field.

In order to effectively support children's brain development, there needs to be a seamless system of child development across early learning and elementary education.

With regard to this, there exists concern within the field about three key issues:

- 1) Alignment between public schools and other community based or private programs that serve children,
- 2) The varied and fragmented sectors (various sectors Head Start, family childcare, public schools), *and*
- 3) Meeting the needs and serving the "whole" child.

The challenge is to create a shared platform in the early care and education field to take collective responsibility for building a 21<sup>st</sup> century educational system that includes all children beginning with our youngest citizens.

### ***The CAYL Principals Fellowship in Early Care and Education***

From 2006-2011, the Barr Foundation funded the CAYL Principals Fellowship in Early Care and Education for elementary school Principals who work in Boston Public Schools. Principals worked voluntarily to develop their leadership skills and approaches using the principles of early care and education. Since 2006, the CAYL Principals Fellowship has worked with 29 Boston Public School Principals. At the time of the program's conclusion in 2011, 29% of BPS elementary-level Principals, serving 7,200 children, had participated in the Fellowship.

CAYL has worked to strengthen their individual and collective capacity to lead efforts to integrate pre-kindergarten (pre-K) children into their schools and to influence district and state level policies. Our nationally recognized professional development cohort model provides intensive year-long learning experiences that are theoretical and practical, conceptual and hands-on. In the process, we have earned respect and appreciation from Principals as well as the BPS administration.

The work of the Fellowship consisted of:

- Dialog with national speakers,
- Monthly seminars and dialogs,
- Site visits designed by the cohort including on-site support at each school,
- Content intense workshops,
- Discussions around school and district policy
- Nourishing and reflective community building sessions, *and*
- Discussion and policy experiences at a state level.

### ***Impact of the CAYL Principals Fellowship in Early Care and Education***

The Fellowship has produced many outstanding accomplishments including specific changes in classrooms, in parent-community relationships, in the social-emotional climate of the schools and in academic achievement. Many of these accomplishments were documented in the *Principals Toolkit* film and booklet. Moreover, as a direct result of the CAYL Institute, support for the NAEYC accreditation of elementary schools has been leveraged and the early childhood director for BPS has acknowledged the key role the Fellowship has played in this initiative. The Fellowship was featured in a front page *Education Week* article and highlighted by the Foundation for Child Development. Outside of BPS, the Fellowship's value led to grants from the Nellie Mae Educational Foundation to support Principals in other Massachusetts school districts for two years. CAYL's National Principals Conference was also launched with the BPS Fellows at the core and was held in the summer of 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012. The Fellowship has been called upon by Arne Duncan's office to provide information and leadership about how to create a national initiative for Principals.

The Fellowship has worked to:

- Create a local peer-learning network among Principals;
- Increase knowledge on how best to establish a high quality pre-K learning environment within school systems;
- Promote family involvement as a key to successful early education;
- Listen to and value Principals' front line information;
- Focus explicitly on learning and practicing the tools of leadership and public policy to identify and develop real-time building-level solutions;
- Build in diversity and promoting cultural competence as a means of demonstrating and promoting democratic principles and early education within schools;
- Champion policy changes at the local, district and state level; and
- Build upon knowledge, skills and competencies Principals already have.

### ***Evaluation of the CAYL Principal Fellowship***

Throughout the CAYL Principal Fellowship process, evaluation has been integral to its development. Significant amounts of data and information have been collected over the years in print as well as through film. The extraordinary lessons learned about school leadership and reform, and their national significance, would benefit from an intentional evaluative synthesis process.

We know that we have achieved success based upon results generated by a unique state of the art evaluation design, which is embedded in all that we do. We were one of 17 leadership programs chosen to participate in *EvaluLEAD*, a yearlong field-test of new concepts. *EvaluLEAD* is designed to help measure the impact of the Fellowships at many levels (individually, organizationally, and in communities and societies). It embraces both "evidential" approaches (e.g. numeric) equally with "evocative" approaches (e.g. stories) to capture the complex changes that result from leadership initiatives. The *EvaluLEAD* framework has been fully implemented with Fellowship cohorts and we intend to survey and interview CAYL Fellows as they leave the program to best describe and understand the changes that happen as a result of their participation.

CAYL Staff conducted pre and post surveys with the Fellows as part of our *EvaluLEAD* framework. In addition, each year CAYL hired an independent evaluator to conduct comprehensive impact surveys with each Fellow.

Documentation of the Fellowship consists of:

1. A toolkit entitled the Principals Toolkit produced in 2009 with over 300 copies in distribution
2. An extensive case study of lessons learned which is being currently being submitted to a publisher

This case study of lessons learned the CAYL Principals Fellowship in Early Education and Care has captured the complexity of making change in a large urban school system. Principal Fellows have chosen to keep their identities anonymous in this report, to create a more honest and open learning environment.

It is rich in lessons for school building leaders, school districts, boards of education, policy makers, advocates, administrators, and early educators who seek positive change for young learners. What makes it especially interesting and enlightening is the extent to which Boston Principals implemented research-informed early childhood “best practice,” created classrooms that exhibited markers of high quality used in the early childhood field, and achieved educationally-meaningful results. Acquiring or leveraging a deep understanding of “early childhood culture” and of state and national policies, the Principals enhanced their decision-making and addressed their challenges with greater skill and sensitivity.

This evaluation highlights stories with reflective quality and draws forth insights and research-supported conclusions that can inform similar efforts and related policy decisions.

### ***Building Momentum and Taking a Stance***

Following our five years of efforts, we have found that early educators’ work follows a general pathway—we call this pathway becoming an “Architect of Change.” Fellows build momentum and take a stance when they analyze their situations, advance their knowledge, act with courage, and accelerate their impact. These are the major strategies and lessons learned around which the case studies are presented:

- Architects of Change **analyze** the realities they face and understand the world as it is, not as they wish it to be. Analysis requires us to be reflective, to be knowledgeable of the science of early learning and child development, and to acknowledge the imbalance of power and the places that hurt.
- Architects of Change **advance** our cause by accepting responsibility for strategic engagement. Knowing exactly what we are doing and keeping the vision front and center, binds us together as a significant force on the move.

- Architects of Change **act** with courage and confidence. Our commitment to young children and our profession makes us persistent and steadfast in our work together. Our strength of character makes us resistant when we must be so.
- Architects of Change **accelerate** the efforts to create progress at every opportunity. We stick together, use the circumstances in front of us, and focus on the change at hand that can make a positive difference in the lives of young children and the people who work with and care for them. This gives us traction and we keep it moving. We know that for young children and early educators in our state, there is no end to the supply of opportunities to make progress and create change.

## **Lesson Learned I**

### **ANALYZE**

## **We Must First Think and Reflect**

*“There is nothing to fear except the persistent refusal to find out the truth, the persistent refusal to analyze the causes of happenings.”*

*-Dorothy Thompson*

In the Barr Principals Fellowship, we first encourage Fellows to *think and reflect* on the information that they are learning and sharing. Analysis, we believe, consists of both facing reality and deepening our knowledge base.

Fellows are supported as they analyze and reflect upon the everyday realities they face in their local communities and in our state. They are encouraged to be realistic about what needs to be done as well as what can be done; to adjust their work and practices accordingly; and to use their acquired new knowledge about the science of early learning and child development.

Fellows analyze and reflect upon the realities faced locally and globally and recognize the “world” is not the way they wish it to be. They are realistic about what needs to be done as well as what can be done and adjust their work and practices accordingly, utilizing their knowledge of the science of early learning and child development.

### ***Reality: Face It!***

We must be honest and comprehensive about the challenges and capacities that represent the contest that lies before us.

We realize that we face persistent and dominant realities that encumber our children, our field, our nation, and our state. Being willing to face reality is an ancient wisdom that has been carried forward as a key leadership principle of the modern world. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, used the following mantra as a central part of his leadership philosophy, “*Face reality as it is, not as it was or as you wish it were.*” You cannot change what you do not face.

Given this wisdom, it is imperative that we look dispassionately at the status of young children in the state of Massachusetts and the role of elementary school Principals as it relates to their status. Our look at current realities for young children is a matter for deep thinking and reflection among us, and cannot be quickly brushed over or approached too casually.

In Massachusetts today, as in other parts of the world, we find that there are basic changes in the very nature of childhood itself. The nature of play, along with wider exposure to media and changes in parenting, have all influenced common understanding of what it means to be a child. “For a new generation, nature is more abstraction than reality. Increasingly, nature is something to watch, to consume, to wear—to ignore.”<sup>viii</sup>

There is substantial evidence that opportunity and achievement gaps emerge early in life, certainly before age two. The early onset of disparities becomes public at school entry. While the nation intensifies its focus on school readiness, more than one third of our nation’s children are considered “not ready” for kindergarten. All of these issues highlight the critical role of the early educator’s efforts to alleviate educational disadvantages as early as possible.

As we think, reflect and analyze the circumstances for young children and for early educators in Massachusetts, we see persistent realities that must be faced as the first step toward change. Accept reality. Take a cold, hard look at what is. Don’t run away from the truth. The work of

early educators matters enormously as familial, academic, and emotional support systems. As illustrated by the stories told by Fellows, even when the environment for young children seems stable and effective, there may be unexamined opportunities for growth.

As we listen to the voices of CAYL Fellows, we realize that facing reality can be difficult. Sometimes reality seems overwhelming. You can feed a hungry child, yet dozens more remain hungry. You reach out to a newcomer from another land, and administrative hurdles make it difficult to get them the help they need. What can you possibly hope to achieve? Changing realities cannot be assumed as an inevitable consequence of either time, or a better economy or changing demography. Facing reality is the beginning of the journey – and we acknowledge that analysis can be a painful beginning as you examine your own community policies and practices, or the level of collaboration among educators from different sectors in your town.

*“We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men; and among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects.”*

*- Herman Melville*

### ***Respect Our Knowledge: We Know More Than We Do***

We know more than we do! Scientific evidence has proven that high quality early care and education has a powerful effect on children, families and communities. Still, we have yet to bring the full power of our knowledge to bear in our work.

The CAYL Institute strongly encourages Fellows to deepen their knowledge base about the field of early care and education. Further, we ask Fellows to reflect on the alignment between our programs and our knowledge base. Then, each Fellow is asked to identify areas for further learning.

We clearly remember President Barack Obama’s “State of the Union” address in February 2013. He stated:

Study after study shows that the sooner a child begins learning, the better he or she does down the road. But today, fewer than three in ten 4-year-olds are enrolled in a high-quality preschool program. We know this works. So let's do what works and make sure none of our children start the race of life already behind. Let's give our kids that chance.

Indeed! Facing realities of our field must be grounded in what we “know.” And, there is considerable evidence that, as early educators we have significant knowledge about both what to do for the success of all young children and how to do it.

One example is found in the Boston, Massachusetts Public Schools (BPS). BPS used several strategies including modifying literacy and math curricula; direct in-classroom coaching over 3 years; consistent and targeted professional development; NAEYC Accreditation Self-Study and

Assessment process; CAYL professional early childhood Fellowship for elementary school Principals; and literacy assessments for PreK following through to second grade. All together, the data from the study showed that providing high-quality early childhood education is entirely doable in a large public school district and in a relatively short period of time (2 years). Mixed income classrooms may play a significant role in lifting all children’s vocabulary scores.<sup>ix</sup>

Nevertheless, as we reflect on the alignment between our programs and our knowledge base, we often discover huge gaps. Too often, young learners face inadequate access, unaffordability, low quality and poor alignment in their early education program. For the early educator there exists a fragile workforce that is not effectively organized to speak for either itself or for the children and families it serves.

As a profession, we know more than we actually do. Therefore, there is a sense of both celebration and uneasiness in the field today.

*“You are a product of your environment. So choose the environment that will best develop you toward your objective. Analyze your life in terms of its environment. Are the things around you helping you toward success - or are they holding you back?”*  
-W. Clement Stone

## FELLOWS ANALYZE

Fellows are supported as they analyze and reflect upon the everyday realities they face in their local communities and in our state. They are encouraged to be realistic about what needs to be done as well as what can be done; to adjust their work and practices accordingly; and to use their acquired new knowledge about the science of early learning and child development.

### **FELLOW #1**

*Our school is incredibly diverse; we have kids from 65 different countries. So parents’ ideas about what makes for good parenting and what makes for good schooling and ideas on how parents and schools are supposed to interact can really vary. So I find myself all the time needing to be like really in the learning and listening mode when I’m interacting particularly with parents who have younger children to really learn how to work effectively with all parents.*

### **FELLOW #2**

Fellow #2 is Principal of a public preschool program. She is responsible for a staff of 60 (all contract) and almost 300 students and families. 113 of her students are on an educational plan dictating the need for specialized services. She was concerned about the impact that the voucher system has had on providing access to preschool and Pre-k to the large number of children in her community in need of them. The impact is felt both in terms of who gets in as well as who stays in – as continuous service is not guaranteed. Despite the fact that there are voucher slots

available and able to accommodate a fair number of children, her program at any given time may have only one child on a voucher participating.

The limited amount of money available to support daycare slots via vouchers has seriously impacted the number of young children who can benefit from a quality pre-school experience. Many of the children most in need of the slots have either not been able to access them or have had inconsistent placements. The system, while well intentioned and necessary, has created unintended consequences for children due to concerns related to the non-portable nature of the vouchers and administrative and restrictive requirements placed upon the programs and parents. As state, federal and local communities experience budget cutbacks, the amount of financial resources allotted to adequately support the system has in many cases been severely decreased at the same time as the number of vulnerable children in need of the services was increasing.

The problem is that although the voucher slots are available, families do not have vouchers due to a number of eligibility requirements they may not be able to meet. She is concerned that the level of service to families such as these is really decreasing. For many years she had been able to augment the number of slots available and help families by utilizing sliding fee and discretionary funds, but she has seen those funds seriously dwindle over the past few years. According to Fellow #4, “ We used to have probably about a \$120,000 of sliding fee money and some discretionary money, and now the discretionary money is gone and we're down to \$70,000 that we can use to support sliding fee.”

She has tried to use her sliding fee money to support as many children as possible but recognizes it is nowhere near enough. Her program is in a community with a large population of non-English speaking families. Fellow #4 states, “we get families in and we have people who don't even have green cards that have kids that are at home with them. So we try to get those folks in but they don't have the financial back up to show that they qualify for this sliding fee scale we can offer to them.” Many of the children whose families qualified for sliding fee assistance have also been on the voucher waitlist for a long time. She has a voucher wait list where children in her center (under sliding fee) who are three and a half have been on the list since they were six months old but never received a voucher. A number of the families have been able to qualify for vouchers for short periods (8 weeks), but due to transportation, health, employment or unemployment concerns they are unable to maintain their voucher status. Although they're on the wait list for a voucher the sliding fee money she uses to accommodate some children now won't be available once they leave her center and their continuity of care will drop off.

Added to her lament is the fact that even though she has space at her center, there are children living around the corner in the homeless shelter and she is unable to bring them into her preschool because there's no funding for them. Those children are caught in an administrative and funding eligibility quandary.

She fears that the administrative requirements for applying for a voucher are so arduous that some families have opted not to apply. The central database for the voucher system at one point had been located in a town that the majority of families were unable to get to due to transportation related problems. They either had no car or access to a car and public transportation was limited and could take upwards of three hours with kids in tow to get there. Support staff that had once been available through the state to help families navigate the voucher

system has all but disappeared. At one point people could walk in without an appointment, but now with only a staff of three, families have to make appointments far in advance.

**FELLOW #3**

*I am a firm believer in change. With that being said, I just feel that because administrators do not have tenure, I try to stay on top of things and learn the new trends. Some of it is out of necessity, but some of it is because I wish to grow. You never know where life is going to lead you, or what opportunities they are going to present. There still is a lot that I feel I need to learn to benefit the pre- k program that I'm trying to bring on board in my school. The way that the school administration system is set means that there really is never any job security out there. I guess that is the best way that I can explain it.*

*I just am at a place in my life that I really do not take anything for granted. I put in a full day's work and more. I have a little bit more vested interest in this district, because my own kids are in high school and junior high here, and they have been for a while. We just had this talk the other day about how I go about my business and there are some things that I have to negotiate on and pick my battles. I do not mean this in a disrespectful way, but sometimes we are working with the public, and various people are coming from different perceptions. It just seems like we are always under attack, whether we feel we are right or wrong. I take it from that perspective and I try to be humble every day. Sometimes, I am better at it than other days.*

*I just made a statement to my superintendent that it seems to be that we have to take a lot of verbal abuse at times and it is not necessarily directed at us, but because we are the easiest accessible from family dynamics, we sometimes get the brunt of it. It is frustrating at times to sit back and have to take it all even if you feel you are right, but that is reality.*

**FELLOW #4**

*For children of poverty and children who are English language learners, they too have something preventing them from accessing the curriculum. What are we doing to help them? Because the research shows that those children, the children of poverty and the children who are English language learners are really your achievement gap.*

**FELLOW #5**

*I don't think (my school district) understands what young children need. All I hear is, 'How are you going to bring your MCAS scores up?' That's the only conversation we ever hear when we go to meetings. I think we really need the evidence to show the value of this type of work. We can make small changes within our community but if teachers go for training and they hear that same message then in the back of their heads they are going to be saying, 'Man, I got to make sure that these kids start to read.' I don't think that message has really reached the people who make decisions. The people who make educational decisions are not educators to begin with they are politicians.*

## **Lessons Learned II**

### **ADVANCE**

### **We Must Plan and Prepare**

*“As we advance in life it becomes more and more difficult, but in fighting the difficulties the inmost strength of the heart is developed.”*

*-Vincent Van Gogh*

In the CAYL Principals Fellowship, we also encourage Principals to plan and prepare. Advancing requires that we articulate a vision, assume a shared identity and actively align what we know with what we do.

### ***Articulate A Vision***

A vision declares and defines our destiny, intentions and expectations. It is our vision that enables us to see the difference between what is and what could be. It is the source of our planning and preparation. The work *begins* with a strong vision that moves us to change the reality that we face. We must clearly articulate our vision-- and we must do so before any of the circumstances have changed! A vision defines the results we anticipate.

What are our intentions as early educators? What results do we anticipate? What consensus will we mold? What is the reality that we confidently create? And move toward? What is our *destiny*?

Change is not an option. Our field is in a period of important and significant transition. Do you see it? Are you ready for it? How are we as a profession going to look as a field in five short years from now? We see the dramatic changes that are barreling toward us. These changes will impact our work and our children for years to come. Will you simply try to survive the change? Or, will you work with others to thrive with a vision that creates a new reality and changes the rules of the game? How can we rise to the occasion and be leaders and Architects of Change? Vision, we believe, begins when we declare our intentions and find ways for our individual and sector intentions to cohere.

Many early educators begin their journey in the field because we care deeply about young children; we are drawn into the wonder of seeing the world through a child's eyes; we are delighted and engaged in the company of children; and we feel an inner calling to serve. Ask yourself:

- What moved me to become an early educator in the first place?
- What still calls out to my heart and my mind?
- What brings me moments of joy in my daily work?
- What motivates me to stay in the early care and education field?

### ***Assume a Shared Identity***

To achieve success, we must affiliate, belong, and connect with each other. We identify with one another as peers and unify our efforts to be a force that can lead and direct the changes we need. We gain power when we work together as one distinct field of professionals. At the CAYL Institute we emphasize the fact that "us" and "them" are ALL early educators. We advocate that being an early educator is our shared identity whether we work in a school, a childcare center, Head Start, in family childcare or another type of program. Yet because of differences in history, funding, professional preparation, our attitudes and all the other factors,

there is all too often a great deal of suspicion, tension, non-communication, and miscommunication among early educators in different settings. This is not a best practice in the interest of children. Yet the challenge of unity persists. If we are to effect change for children and ourselves, a vision of shared identity is essential.

In other professions, we see that people typically identify with something that is bigger than just one person or sector. An attorney identifies with the legal profession as a whole whether employed in its corporate or public defender sectors. A physician identifies as a doctor whether a pediatrician or general practitioner.

In our view, an early educator ought to identify as an early educator whether a public school Principal or a family childcare provider! Our sense of a shared identity is important in two additional ways: it can help us to counter the isolation, silos and sense of low prestige that many of us experience. We have to learn to lead together, not simply advocate for our own branch of the tree, if we wish to be architects of change. Also, consolidating our identity as early educators means looking closely at the attributes that make us who we are-- our field's distinctive competencies, contributions and capabilities. These are the attributes that distinguish us from a good babysitter or loving grandmother.

### ***Recognize Symptoms of Asymmetrical Conflict***

Andrew J.R. Mack put forth the concept of asymmetrical conflict in his 1975 article "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars," and his thoughts relate strongly to the battle we face constantly as early educators. How can we overcome and change the realities imposing on our progress? How can we achieve greater balance between public opportunities for young children compared to the public opportunities available to children over age five? Three symptoms of asymmetrical conflict are: intimidation, negation, and isolation. These strategies often create an impression that the needs and hopes of the early educator are "invisible" –or that they do not matter, that their perspectives are being ignored, hidden from view, or not considered.

### ***Reassess Your Willingness***

It is in this crucial step that Principals and early educator leaders must reassess their alacrity in standing up to intimidation, negation, and isolation in their lives. There are many ways to face challenges, and in our work we synthesize these as typically occurring in two ways. Recognizing asymmetrical challenges, some of us choose to face Goliath as chameleons, while others take a more direct approach to being an architect of change. The chameleon amazes with its ability to change color as a survival mechanism, to blend in to the background to appear invisible. But when we use the word "chameleon" to describe a person's actions, it's usually not in positive terms: we think of a person who, consciously or unconsciously, adjusts him- or herself to seem in step with popular trends, fads, or beliefs. For us as early educators, the chameleon presents a paradox: yes, of course, we must change. But we must do so with authenticity. When we change colors it cannot be for the moment, or until the threat subsides. We must be thoughtful and clear about what must be preserved in our educational culture and beliefs. Our intent cannot be

rigidity—it must be intentionality. After all, those who do not bend will break. We must find the middle authentic ground: to be co-determinants of the direction, pace, and content of change. So, we gradually realize: we might survive, but we certainly can't thrive, as chameleons.

*“You can distance what is chasing you, but you cannot outrun what is inside of you.”*

*-Rwandan proverb*

## **FELLOWS ADVANCE**

Fellows commit to and accept responsibility for strategic engagement actions and activities with others that unify and advance the field and strengthen its collective voice. They understand the need to articulate a vision and to prepare and implement a plan for actualizing that vision; they understand the importance of affiliating with others and assuming a shared identity to help direct the changes they envision; and they recognize the value of aligning what they know with what they do in order to advance their cause.

### ***Voices of People of Color***

As part of the Fellowship, the CAYL Institute held focus groups with Latino, Asian, and black early educators in Massachusetts to explore perceptions of how leadership for young children is shared across ethnic groups. Leaders who are Asian, black, and Latino expressed experiencing “a sense of professional isolation and marginalization.” Virtually every individual recalled being the only person of color at key program or policy meetings, and many spoke about the pressures they feel to be the spokesperson for their entire group. Their negation emerged from a number of factors:

- **Their ideas.** Many reported that their ideas and contributions were ignored, often to be embraced later when voiced by a person not of color.
- **Lack of data about their children and communities.** The participants expressed a need for more data about children of color, and more precise analysis of those data. For example, should Haitian and Cape Verdean immigrants be counted as African Americans? Are all Spanish speakers appropriately grouped as Latino despite diverse cultural origins? Does the designation “Asian” properly represent children from China, Japan, and India? By not tracking data by race and ethnicity, one participant said, “it’s an excuse to do nothing.”
- **Exclusion of their collective voice.** Participants pointed out that non-white women in the early childhood workforce are concentrated in classroom or support roles and lack the flexibility in their schedules to attend professional meetings or policy discussions that occur during the workday. The implication is that communities of color have not been called upon to play major roles in shaping the course of change.

- **Some groups prefer to focus on issues internal to their own communities.** Many of these communities have relied heavily on developing their own structures and institutions. Participants spoke passionately about the strength and validation they find within community-based leadership and professional development circles. Some refuse to lose contact with or give up on their communities as they gain more influential roles.

We should point out that some of these candid reflections stunned some of the white participants, who acknowledged they had “no idea” that their colleagues had such strong feelings. Although one person dismissed the overall tone as “whining,” most listened and learned. One woman said she recognized the value of “hearing it, although it was so striking and painful.”

**Fellow #6**

*There seems to be a lot of conflict between early education providers and public schools. In Boston, we have I guess what you would call a preschool program, K1. And it is obvious that some kids are suited for our K1 program and some kids would be better off in more of our preschool daycare program. But, people don't seem to have the right information in order to make the right choice.*

**Fellow #7**

*My vision is to be in a place where children can develop naturally; where barriers to natural development are removed; where things that would come naturally like creativity, problem solving, sense of community, all of those things; that kids are in an environment where those kinds of things happen, positively.*

*I don't think that vision is shared. I think it's in conflict with many things (i.e. popular opinion about what early education is or what state, federal, and local action). I think it's in conflict with the standards movement, it's in conflict with high stakes testing, it's in conflict with this whole idea of RTT, and it's in conflict with the idea that young people have to compete.*

**Fellow #8**

Fellow #8 is a Principal in an inner city elementary (K1-5) school and has been an educator for over 15 years, the last five of which has been as a Principal. Her prior background was that of a ESL teacher and her training had been geared towards the field of elementary education. Her entry into the world of early childhood coincided with her appointment as Principal of an elementary school, which had a full day K1 Early Childhood Program. She is very clear that prior to becoming part of the CAYL Fellowship, she did not initially have a vision with respect to the education of her youngest students. When initially queried about her vision, she remarked, “to be quite honest, because I'm not an early childhood person, I didn't really have a specific vision for early learners before I joined CAYL”

She understood the importance of vision especially as it related to planning, goal setting and successful outcomes for her school and the majority of her elementary school students. She could readily articulate a vision for her upper elementary school grades and was clear about what was needed to achieve those goals. She was less clear about what was needed for her K1 population. Her involvement with the CAYL Fellowship helped her to better understand the field of early education and its impact on children and to recognize that the needs of her K1 children were

much different and required a very different approach and process. The Fellowship experience not only helped increase her understanding of early childhood but shaped and solidified her thoughts with respect to the adoption of a vision for the youngest students in her school. It also provided her the framework and a basis on which she could explain its' importance. By the end of her Fellowship experience, she had formulated a vision for her early childhood program. In terms of planning and curriculum development, she gravitated towards the constructivist learning theory. She feels strongly that it provides the key component for understanding early childhood and how children learn. She believes that learning should be hands on and exploratory for children at that age. But she also believes that there have to be mechanisms in place that help assess whether or not the children are learning. Appropriate assessment approaches for gathering vital information include: videotaping what they're doing; recording; and, interviewing students as they're exploring. She is an advocate of center based instruction in her lower early childhood classrooms because she understands that you can't expect little children to sit on the rug for 20 minutes as the older children may be able to.

When queried afterwards about her vision for early childhood, she states:

My vision for early childhood is that it's academically rigorous and that it's socially appropriate and that teachers are given the tools and necessary resources to be successful so that children can be successful. I still have the same high expectation for early learners, using different types of data, to assess how children learn. Not just the formative assessments, but making observations of what's going on when children are learning and affording teachers the opportunity to do that. I try to treat the parents as co-teachers because I do think that they have information to add to our community. So we also create benchmarks for our early learners of where we would like to have so that they could be successful in the upcoming year. Even the way in which I have my workshop for families, before school and after school. We've also modified that too, so that we can be resourceful to our families, and help to give them tips and guidelines of things that they can do at home to help out their little ones'. I expect for my children to be exposed to rigorous learning. It's no different than what I have for the upper grades, it's just that now that I have a better understanding of early childhood, I'm able to create a realistic vision in a realistic plan of action of how to accomplish that vision.

Some of the practices she has implemented as a result of her vision for her younger children have also influenced some of the work she is doing with her upper elementary students. She states:

If you look into the early childhood classroom there's a lot of center work that's going on. But once the children got to third grade and on there were no centers and the kids were bored. And we were losing them. So we actually started implementing centers in grades, 3, 4, and 5. It's working out very well. The teachers love it. The kids, they love it. So we're taking a lot from what the teachers in early childhood are doing and bringing it up to the upper grades.

### ***Fellow #9***

“I’ve been on school committee for 15 years in my community,” far preceding Fellow #9’s time working with the CAYL Institute. But the Fellowship help her “to see the big picture at the state level” and “helped me to come up with some ways to deal with advocating for early educators “being listened to,” not dismissed as just babysitters by legislators and others keeping an eye on educational budgets. She is convinced of “the importance of data and research and having the backing of those kinds of things and connecting it to what other folks felt was important in order to get your message across” to those in charge of early education budget funding. “That was an important lesson I learned while I was at CAYL. I’ve become the go-to person in my community when it comes to early childhood issues.” Participant “helped write the infantile standards and guidelines,” for those working with children. So when people who don’t really pay too much attention “to what’s going on, like at the state level, on an ongoing basis, especially around early childhood issues, it gave me some weight, so that when I spoke, people would listen,” she said.

“And it also gave me some really good tools on how to deal with people- in a way that’s not damaging- who don’t agree with you” that young children learn important life skills at younger ages than most people realize they do. She says, “I have learned the importance of knowing how to get my message across and understand why other people have different opinions.”

### ***Fellow #10***

Fellow knows what her vision is for young children. She explains, “my vision is that children have the opportunity through early education and through early intervention, to come to kindergarten, with the skills that they need to be able to access and make school work for them from the very beginning.”

She is concerned about the barriers preventing her vision from being actualized. She explains, “there seems to be a lot of conflict between early education providers and public schools. I think people on the outside of the public school system are a bit wary of what’s going on in the public schools, so I don’t think they always see us as a potential partner.”

Nevertheless, she is trying to strengthen the alliances between the public school system and other sectors of the early education and care sectors. This is important to her because within her building is a K1 program, and “it is obvious that some kids are suited for our K1 program and some kids would be better off in more of our preschool daycare program. People don’t seem to have the right information in order to make the right choice [for their children]. We are trying to reach out in our immediate community and ask childcare providers to share resources in order to make it better for all children in the community and to make sure that every child has access to an early education experience.”

She is optimistic that the bonds can be strengthened between the different sectors of the early childhood field. She says that the “common tie is that is in the best interest of children. It’s in all of our interests to have a well-educated community from the beginning. We don’t want our kids starting behind from day 1, because they may never catch up.”

Perhaps the most powerful tools utilized in achieving greater alignment and collaboration amongst all of these of these different sectors is willingness to share resources and “our

eagerness to learn from others and adopt successful ideas and share what has been a success for us.”

***Fellow #11***

*Most of my colleagues and myself are looking to partner with community agencies and corporate groups and things that can assist us in getting the resources we need to make things happen for our families. We're attempting to partner with anyone who has an interest in the community and who can help us reach our goal of having children starting school prepared.*

*One success I can think of is that we've incorporated the early childhood center in Somerville and the parenting drop-in program into our school program. So we have a playgroup and we have a mommy and me space in our family center so that parents can come in and feel welcome and at the same time learn ways to help their child's early development.*

*One person's success is every person's success. So, if we are able to benefit from a partnership in the community we want to make sure that the benefits are spread among all of the programs, the agencies, staff that affect children in this community. So, it's to everyone's benefit to work in tandem as opposed to compete.*

## **Lessons Learned III**

**ACT!**

**We Are Courageous and Bold**

*“Actions express priorities.”*

*-Mahatma Gandhi*

To successfully accomplish our vision will require personal commitment, competence, character and courage. As drawn from the work of Ron Heifetz and his colleagues,<sup>x</sup> leadership is the activity of mobilizing the community to tackle tough problems. The purpose of adaptive leadership is to help individuals and organizations adapt and thrive in challenging environments. *Adaptive Work* is defined as leading change in a situation where both the problem and the solution are unclear and new learning is required by all the participants.

How do you know when you are facing an adaptive challenge requiring adaptive leadership? There are several questions we might ask: Do we already know solutions? Will the focus of change require new values, habits and behaviors? Do difficult choices need to be made? Will sustainable change take time to achieve? Could an effective or charismatic leader make the change?

Gil Rendle notes how often leaders are asked to “fix” problems instead of learning about new paths. Yet adaptive work cannot be accomplished without engagement by those who “own” the challenge. By definition, a basic premise of adaptive leadership is that the answers for the critical issues confronting us as a field reside within those of us who own the adaptive challenge. The leadership work we are trying to catalyze is a collective activity that needs to engage a wide range of people who are in varied positions and who have diverse points of contact with the field’s adaptive challenges-- rather than the conveyance of solutions from anointed leaders or leaders in positions of authority. Yet in times of distress, the community may desire a charismatic authority that appears active, who has a vision, and who promises stability. This can prevent people from engaging with problems when they must. Charismatic authority can generate a mindless following, or can devolve into bureaucratic institutions. This leadership work will have to be *our* work. It’s time for the early care and education field to hold the mirror up to its own behavior. It’s time to examine the ways in which our responses to change too often hinder the field’s progress and minimize our effectiveness as Architects of Change on behalf of young children, families, and the early care and education field.

So if we recognize that we are facing an adaptive challenge, how do we get started?

1. “Get on the balcony” so that we can understand the big picture.
2. Focus attention. Lay the groundwork. Build awareness.
3. Create a learning environment.
4. Build capacity with others to do the work.
5. Manage tensions.

Tensions should be expected as part of the change process. Disagreement will naturally emerge from engaging with difficult choices and confronting the losses that these choices entail. Heifetz advises adaptive leaders to “keep the work at the centre” (a term for not losing sight of the ultimate goal) even in the face of “work avoidance” strategies to resist the pain, anxiety or conflict that comes with engagement with the problem.

What issues should you begin to tackle? Our answer comes from the advice of Booker T. Washington: “Cast down your bucket where you are”<sup>xi</sup> and begin with your everyday challenges. Your front-line knowledge is an important source of information. You are positioned to see firsthand the needs of the community’s children as well as the needs of our profession. The very

issues and solutions for children and ourselves can be gleaned from the situations we see every day.

Reflecting on your everyday challenges can be a formidable, yet deeply satisfying task. Why does courageous action start with your everyday challenges? Because, you experience the day-to-day reality of being an early educator and you have the practical knowledge that forms the core functions of our field. Everyday challenges enable you to crawl, and then walk before your run. Making a difference in the lives of children or in our profession is a commitment that requires your time and will. You will need to schedule time to achieve your goals. This work will need to become a priority for you or even more of a commitment.

Fellows underscore their commitment to young children and the profession through intentional and confidently displayed personal and collective acts of courage. They do “The Right Thing” and display courageous acts of personal commitment, competence, and character in the midst of and in spite of criticism and efforts to intimidate, negate and isolate them. They defy the “odds” in both small and large ways through acts, which improve outcomes for young children.

### ***Align Knowing and Doing***

Align "knowing" and "doing" and act with courage. We must use what we know... every day, in every situation, in every interaction with a child, family member, peer, or administrator. Success requires personal commitment, standing up courageously and developing new "weapons." such as positive deviance, adaptive leadership, and disruption.

Our commitment to young children helps build our competence as early educators. We are highly informed in the science of early learning and child development. When our practice is in sync with our core knowledge base we strengthen our professional character and we are fully prepared to advance our cause. Fellowships present a forum where we can examine our practice and align it with the latest research and best practices.

As early educators we are more likely to succeed when we use and build from the unique skills we already have and when we can align knowing with doing. We cannot be change-adverse. In addition, we must be willing to speak up and build from the knowledge and skill that is familiar and already tested. Several qualities support us as we close the gap between what we know and what we do: *personal commitment, competence, character, and courage.*

### ***Begin With Your Everyday Challenges***

The "battle" must begin sometime, somewhere, and there is no time like now!

Reflecting on your everyday challenges can be a formidable, yet deeply satisfying task. Why does courageous action start with your everyday challenges? Because, you experience the day-to-day reality of being an early educator and you have the practical knowledge that forms the core functions of our field. Everyday challenges enable you to crawl, then walk before your run.

Making a difference in the lives of children or in our profession is a commitment that requires your time and will. You will need to schedule time to achieve your goals. This work will need to become a priority for you or even more of a commitment.

Acceleration is determined by our responsiveness to field-wide needs and the amount of traction we can get developing opportunities to use these change tools with current change projects. We get traction and begin to accelerate by addressing the human element of creating change. Leaders must understand their role in leading change. Starting with our everyday challenges provides us with the traction needed to accelerate. Our leadership efforts are directed toward the pragmatic, hands-on application of real-time change projects. We're picking up speed and moving ahead.

In particular, Kennedy's Day of Affirmation 'Ripple of Hope' speech in Jameson Hall at the University of Cape Town on 06 June 1966, which forms part of his epitaph at his grave at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington DC, continues to resonate strongly:

It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot of others or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.

## FELLOWS ACT

*"Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear."*

*-Meg Cabot*

Barr Principal Fellows commit to and accept responsibility for strategic engagement actions and activities with others, which unify and advance the field and strengthen its collective voice. They understand the need to articulate a vision and to prepare and implement a plan for actualizing that vision; they understand the importance of affiliating with others and assuming a shared identity to help direct the changes they envision; and they recognize the value of aligning what they know with what they do in order to advance their cause.

### ***Fellow #12***

"I sat on the 0 to 5 Governor's Readiness Group. Because many of us in early childhood programs were from different organizations, our experiences were diverse but the common thread was CAYL." She feels that the Fellowship has empowered her to report the needs of educators and children's needs more directly to those in positions of authority. Whether public policy or actual teaching practices of concern are the subject, she has found she and other educators working with children had more understanding and therefore more chance to affect

changes that can improve the experiences of the children in their care and in the children's family lives, too.

“There were enough of us at the table who had had the conversations about this in the past and who ...knew now how to frame the questions or to ask decision-makers, through our relationships with CAYL” to be able to put issues on the agenda before a wider audience” including legislators in charge of funding” education programs and change.

At the time, early childhood educators were “really pushing,” with CAYL's help, to have Massachusetts finally look at Birth to (age) Three education, and not just stick to helping to fund preschool type programs only for those age four and older. “There were enough of us again with the common thread of CAYL to put prenatal to birth issues and up-to-date information on research about children's learning on the radar of legislators as something important in education,” she said.

She explains that talking more directly to legislators were better equipped to explain that they were not talking about funding “babysitting” but funding more training for early childhood educators so they could deliver those programs to children as early as they were able to benefit from the programs. That's often much earlier than average adults, even some parents, recognize that children can understand and learn.

She said:

Little children are like sponges for knowledge much earlier than preschool age – and don't perform as well, long-run learning-wise, if they are exposed to preschool basic learning only *after* age three. I feel strongly that it was really the push of some of the (early childhood and CAYL) constituents that really pushed that agenda, which helped to move it along. I wouldn't say we were solely responsible, but I think that the influence of us and the voice of us really helped those funding education learn that early learning for children pays off in the children's education long-run for all.

### ***Fellow #13***

*There was a problem with rest mats at our work. There was a certain chemical in them and there was a new study that showed that it wasn't healthy for the kids to be sleeping on. It wasn't a state thing, the state didn't say oh stop having the kids sleeping on it; it was a health thing. We took it upon ourselves to let the others know the unsafe things going on. It wasn't that we caught this issue before the state did, but it wasn't state mandated, so we took it upon ourselves to say, 'Hey this is not healthy for our kids and we need our kids to be healthy.'*

*It's more than just following the standards; we are going beyond that. If the standard is that they should be sleeping on the mats and we still know it's unhealthy for them, we are going to take care of that because it's important for us to have our children safe.*

**Fellow #12**

*We have a policy about sick children, but being partners with the family I find that we keep the children in the office a lot when they are sick instead of sending them home because the parents can't leave work because they will lose their job. I find that we keep the children when they are sick, and I know we are not supposed to, but the parents need to work. Also, they can't get a ride to get there so I find it hard when they are sick to send them home, but I don't mind keeping them in the office with me. I just find that this is what we do with the kids to help the parents.*

**Fellow #14**

*One of the things that take tremendous courage is making a call to the department of children and families on behalf of a child. Sometimes getting that family involved with services and training or a mom who hasn't really been willing to open up about domestic abuse or issues who is now willing to share can make a tremendous impact in the lives of the families of the children we teach. It's not necessarily courage but persistence that is important.*

**Fellow #15**

*We have decided to partner to address our transportation and group admission issues as it relates to field trips and expanded learning opportunities as we start the summer season. Working together we can expand the learning opportunities for all of our children. We are also looking to address the biases and bigotry that still plague our children in the school system and the communities.*

**Fellow #16**

Fellow #16 is a Principal of a Massachusetts' elementary school, which houses grades Pre-K through Grade 5, and her first assignment as a Principal. Prior to her current assignment, she spent 12 years as an educator in a large urban public school system. She started as a first grade teacher in a two-way bilingual school and then moved on to become a Math Coach where she was responsible for two elementary schools. As a Math Coach, she provided hundreds of teachers in the district with professional development in the area of mathematics as well as ran workshops for families and administrators on supporting children in the area of mathematics. She then went on to become an Assistant Principal at a Turnaround School in Boston where she was responsible for grades Pre-K through Grade 2 and set the stage for the NAEYC accreditation process for the pre-school and kindergarten programs using the accreditation process to leverage family engagement.

She considers family engagement to be an especially important component of the education process for her students. During her first year as Principal at the school, she committed her time to engaging families and building relationships. Her actions during her first year were influenced in part by a video, "The Principals Story" she first viewed as part of her participation in a CAYL fellowship program. She was inspired by the actions of one of the main Principal highlighted in the story and that coupled with her strong belief in the value of family engagement resulted in "Positive Deviance" actions that led to improved outcomes for one of her students and his family.

She recognized a particularly pressing problem with one of her students. “There was a student that was targeted as having behavior problems. He had just moved in to the community from a neighboring community and he was really struggling behaviorally and creating relationships problems with other peers.”

Traditional methods including reaching out to the mother and trying to have her come into the school were utilized by school personnel to try and get to the root of the problems in order to develop a plan to help him, but the results were not very successful. She decided that a non-traditional method might be more effective and decided to visit the child and his family in their home, an action that *deviated* from traditional responses for solving concerns of this type, especially by the Principal.

Over the course of a year she visited the family in their home four to five times. She set down with his mother and talked about what her hopes and dreams were for him as well as got a sense of what behavioral challenges he presented at home. The results for both the child and his parent were outstanding. She was able to identify the root of some of his problems and help her staff develop appropriate educational and social/emotional development plans for him.

She explains:

I saw the change in his reaction to me. However what the visit provided or the outcome of the visit was that the mother was able to get additional help for him. I found out through my visit that the mother was illiterate, which nobody knew beforehand. So I was able to sit down her and go through papers and guide her. She never would go and get an advocate for herself because she didn't know how to do that so I was able to help her in that situation and then when there were some problems with some of her children that were adults, she then came to me and ask for my help, which I was very honored. That means a lot to me. And one of the other things that I learned was that she always had a negative experience with education and so I was able to change that for her. In the future months, she turned to the school rather than turned away from the school. Through those visits I also noticed a lot of strengths that they had going on while it was not necessarily perceived that way at school.

Fellow's approach, while successful, was not universally accepted as a method for handling concerns of this type. She was advised early on not to do it (going to a student's home) because of the precedent it set with respect to professional boundaries and in this case in particular for personal safety reasons. She didn't allow those concerns to overshadow her belief that utilizing a different approach for engaging a family could make a difference and improve educational outcomes for her students.

The most immediate and direct impact of her action was the positive affect it had on the child and his ability to learn. A secondary affect it had on the child and his ability to learn. A secondary impact was the effect it had on Fellow #15 and her growth as a Principal and strengthening of her vision for the future.

She has longed believed, as demonstrated by her professional history, that family and community engagement is important. She states “that it's really critical to be a part of the community as a school leader but realizes often times it's hard to create boundaries professionally...I think that you know by breaking down those barriers, by not seeing yourself as just being here at the school but allowing yourself to go out into the community and be part of the community is so important especially nowadays with all the stresses that are on people personally. It's so important to be a part of what is going on. I live very close to where I work and I didn't have that experience when I was in my last district. And I'm able to walk into Target and see 4 or 5 families and you know and I have the t-shirt that I just bought for my son and they have the t-shirt in their cart, the same t-shirt and I can say to them, you know I can identify. It helps so much in the way that I am able to run the school”

Despite the fact that her role as a Principal allowed her to exercise certain power and authority with respect to decision-making, her decision in this instance can be considered a courageous act of positive deviance. She embarked upon a track and prevailed against conventional wisdom; she succeeded when the odds were against her and ultimately she made a decision which was right not only for that child but for his family and the school community as well.

**Fellow #18**

*I was able to manipulate the budget in a way so that we could have a social worker here three days a week and next year she'll be here 5 days a week, and there's a great need for it. To do so I had to shift the funds and since the nurse is no longer needed as much, I decreased that position and made the social welfare position full time.*

**Fellow #19**

*I've really learned to have a working definition of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). I can actually look at something and name what's developmentally appropriate about it and how it fits in; what it does for kids. I think the accreditation process helped me to really clarify and understand DAP better in terms of day-to-day priorities.*

**Fellow #20**

*One improvisation we had to make was we had to cut the position for a school librarian. We have a collection of books but we don't have a librarian. But we have two libraries fairly close by so we did a whole campaign last spring called Walking With a Purpose where we like challenged every class in the school to do at least one walking trip to the library. I felt like that was leveraging both connecting kids with reading and becoming familiar with the resource of the public library. But it also was a great health and wellness strategy to get kids out walking and realizing, oh you can just walk to the library, you don't have to take the bus or have someone drive you there.*

**Fellow #21**

*We have partnered with Boston Medical Center. We have been able to pair our parents up with the pediatric unit at Boston Medical Center so that our parents can basically have a medical home at Boston medical Center for all of their children, not just children who attend our school. So that parent is forming a relationship with the pediatrician. That parent's getting solid*

*information about their child, about their child's development. Somebody is working alongside the parent besides the school in order to make that child prepared for a strong start in school. We're very proud to be working with Boston Medical Center. Also, we just started a partnership with Whittier Street Health Center around parenting. So there is going to be a parenting circle here at the school, and it's not just to assist those parents who have children in school because we're asking parents to bring their preschool children. They bring their babies with them to the meetings, so that we can start talking about what are we going to do for this child who's not even in school yet.*

**Fellow #22**

*I often call upon the good graces of people. There are people in the building who don't mind doing certain things and you have to learn who they are and what it is they don't mind doing, and you kind of target them. For example, we have one teacher who used to be a typist, so she doesn't care what you say or how quickly you say it. She loves typing up the notes in a meeting. So we are all relieved. We had so many systems regarding who was going to dictate the notes and who was going to get them out to people and who was going to put them on the notebook to save them etc. Well, she took that on without hesitation.*

*Another example is that there's a person who we have among us who is super detailed. For example, I can say to her, "what happened 2 years ago on a specific date with a particular piece of the curriculum. What if we decide to do?" She has it; she's like a record keeper.*

*I realized that people have skills and talents that they don't necessarily think are great things until you demonstrate there's real need for that. It's about matching kids and teachers and initiatives that kind of build the school community and make it work.*

## **Lesson Learned IV**

### **Accelerate**

### **We Believe and Achieve!**

*“Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.”*

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*

We agree with Mark Twain when he said: "The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

Before we can accelerate we must get started. We ask Fellows: How can we, and how can *you*, help young children succeed and advance our profession?

Inspired by the tenacity, passion, and commitment of so many early educators in our field, the Barr Principals Fellowship helps Principals stake out and claim space for creating a new culture of caring of all children. Let's be clear: we do this not only because each child deserves it, but also because it is the right thing to do. And early educators deserve to have a place of honor and respect in this culture.

Barr Fellows challenge themselves – even beyond their comfort zone – to articulate a vision, assume a shared identity, align what they know with what they do and act with courage and confidence. Fellows rise to these challenges because they know they must be the leaders that imagine the world as it *ought* to be for young children and for the people who work with them. They must be the leaders whose patterns of action construct the pathways that lead to progressive steps for all children.

Time and time again we are reminded of how much conscious choice and intention it takes to make a difference in the lives of children and their families. In all of the stories from early educators and our field and in everything we do at The CAYL Institute, we see early educators reflect, plan and move to take action. Early educators want to advance our profession, to consistently achieve the best outcomes for all children, and to take responsibility for collective problem solving. Every act we take leaves a "ripple of hope"

Today, we not only work to create change, we have the opportunity and conscience to **accelerate the pace of change** for young children and our profession. What does it mean to accelerate? We have to pick up the pace...pick up speed. We can only increase speed by getting traction. As state houses and the White House become attuned to the importance of the early years, we accelerate change when we hasten, step up, speed up, stimulate, advance, promote, spur and quicken a sense of urgency for change. Acceleration is the rate at which an object changes its speed or velocity. We believe we must now seize every opportunity to pick up speed.

There may never be a better chance to achieve more urgency and advance our profession. How quickly we can increase the quality of change is a measure of acceleration. The type of power we exercise, the types of networks we build and sustain and the intensity of our focus are all factors that affect the acceleration of change. While the rate of change-- Acceleration-- is controlled by elements both inside and external to the field of early care and education, we definitely have a role to play in getting traction.

Our theory about how change is accelerated for both young children and for early educators focuses on the development and actions of the field's leadership both today and tomorrow. To accelerate change will require that families as well as academic, business, and education leaders work collaboratively to address the field's most pressing challenges and opportunities. We accelerate change by bringing together talented emerging and established leaders from a variety of sectors to build their capacity and better serve their communities. The CAYL Institute

accelerates change by offering intensive Fellowships, by building organizational capacity, and by engaging, mentoring and coaching multiple stakeholders. We believe that change is accelerated as a result of whom people are and what people do because this is how traction is gained-- and better traction will serve to increase speed.

- To accelerate we ask Fellows to:
- Find a Confidential Community and Share leadership
- Gather your Allies
- Focus on what you do want, not what you don't want
- Document and communicate impact

We must always seek opportunities to link with other initiatives, communities, and sectors as appropriate. Nothing builds momentum like a strong and trusted alliance. It's the difference between the 'little engine that could' chugging along and the high-speed rail, pulling multiple cars, engineered and operated by early educators.

This is the information age and like it or not, data is the stock and trade – the coin of the day. These acceleration steps define the tactics it will take for all of us as leaders to create high-quality and developmentally appropriate early care and education programs for all children.

While much of the conflict to come will be fought one-on-one, each of us must associate with a group of like-minded professionals to share strategies, encourage one another, help each other learn from our mistakes, and celebrate our achievements.

Today, we have no excuses for not documenting and communicating the efforts and successes of the early childhood learning community. Before the miracle of printing, we had only oral history to pass down stories from generation to generation. Now, we have every oral, print, and digital medium imaginable to tell our tales of striding into asymmetrical conflicts and beating the odds emboldened with the shield of community, the weapons of our acquired wisdom and knowledge, and the righteous call to fight for those who cannot fight for themselves—our babies, our toddlers, our young children whom we prepare to function and thrive in learning communities.

We urge Fellows to brandish their early childhood expertise and work with others to influence systems, but when your efforts bring results, be sure to share it—communicate it to people who might not otherwise know that you are achieving change that matters for young children.

We see in recent history many instances of small successes, but we must also face this fact: we have not yet achieved full-scaled success for all children.

## FELLOWS ACCELERATE

Fellows scrutinize and take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way. They attach urgency to their efforts and keep it moving. “Never let up” is their operating motto. They find and affiliate with confidential communities that help sustain and encourage them while on their

journey and enhance their sense of belonging to something important. They document and communicate their successes with each other and the community in large and seek opportunities to “spread the word.”

**Fellow #23**

*You know, sometimes you think you're in anomaly. You're in this boat by yourself and the things that don't come together the way that they should. You think it only happens to you but to get other people's perspective and to hear their experiences and how they solve the problems.*

*In the Fellowship, we had the ability to talk about things in the network. We go much deeper than surface level on all of the topics that come up, and then get to hear other people's thinking and understanding about how they interpret some of the materials and ideas.*

*Being in a group of my fellow Principals gave me more to think about and helped me sort of affirm my decisions to believe what I believe. It was always a rich conversation.*

*In the Fellowship, we had the ability to say what we truly thought and not feel uncomfortable about it and that there may be repercussions. We were able to share our knowledge and experience without having to put up shields and without having to consider our words really carefully because they may come back and haunt us. I think it was an authentic experience in that we were not being driven to a particular goal although sometimes [the facilitator] did have very specific goals. But the goals weren't contrary to where we wanted to go. And sometimes we wouldn't have chosen those paths but through the conversation we figured out that that really is what we wanted in the first place.*

*It was really about taking the journey with people who are in the same field who are having the same experiences and really talking about that and finding solutions in each other. You know, when they talk about collegiality, this is it. And, it's not that anyone is more or less accomplished in it. We all have our plusses and minuses. So, let's put the plusses on the table and adopt them. An example that comes to mind is when I said “I think that if I could have a health care program as strong as the Head Start folks, my kids would be in a better place and I can't talk about that with someone within the public school system because they don't see that as a priority.” This sentiment certainly opened the eyes of one of the school committee people. I talked to one of them about how I can run an academic program in my building without too much to do, but if I wanted some health services that meet the needs of my families then it's an uphill battle. She understood Head Start but she didn't understand that the public schools don't have the same kind of opportunities. So you could see the shock on her face when the conversation came together for her.*

**Fellow #24**

*I can see the effects of having a community in terms of collaboration and increased teamwork. In my building, teachers are more willing to help each other out. We've seen this terms of them sharing their ideas and sharing their materials with one another; teachers not hoarding and holding on to things. We have had lot of good discussions going on in the building in terms of what can we do together. You see it in terms of teachers being more respectful with their class when they're in the part of the building that house a lot of our Kindergarten classrooms. They're*

*more respectful to the learners. And there is a greater understanding that the youngest children are learning too, so you do need to be quiet in the hallway. Teachers in the upper grades are sending their students downstairs to read and be buddies to the kindergartners more. Also, kindergartners are coming upstairs and sharing their work to the students in the upper grade. So we're celebrating each other's work.*

**Fellow #25**

*What attracted me to CAYL was the collaboration and the camaraderie between Principals. Since the Principal position is often an isolated position, just being able to network with Principals who are focused on early childhood was really beneficial for me and it has impacted my work. It's helped me to build more of a network of Principals that I can call if I have a question or people that are more like-minded. A lot of Principals that I've talked to in the past have been dealing with and focusing more on upper grades, 3rd grade and beyond where the state scores seem to be the main focused and it's helped everyone to understand, especially through the CAYL process, how early learning is the foundation of all of that.*

**Fellow #26**

*I think the most important thing I got from the Fellowship was collaboration, networking, and relationships. I think CAYL really taught me about how important that is in terms of people. If you want people to listen to what you're saying, or what you believe in, it has to be built on trust and respect, but also common goals or relationships. And I think that the strongest thing that I got from the CAYL Institute was the importance of that.*

*I think to connect the threads that CAYL has woven as it has really energized me. So if we were all sitting in our own departments or in our places of employment and working in a silo, I don't think it would be as effective, nor would I feel as supported. Because sometimes you're working with people who are not of like-minded. And the place that you could always go to, to bounce ideas off or just vent or to get energized is through my CAYL connections. And it reaches out over so many different sectors...sometimes I have to sit back and think about it, and say "wow." It's also important to say that, personally for me, I commute every day from the Cape to Boston, and I couldn't do that if I didn't have the support of my colleagues and friends through CAYL who have also given me the keys to their apartments and let me stay there. I wouldn't have taken a job where I wouldn't have had that option if it hadn't been for the fact that I had CAYL connections to support me in that way. I laugh about it, but at the same time, it's an important piece of how do you make something work logistically and emotionally and professionally.*

## Next Steps

The lessons learned and outlined in this book, along with case studies of the Principals, have been described in a book that has been submitted for publication. We will keep the Barr Foundation informed about the progress of the book's review. We will seek your permission to acknowledge the Barr Foundation when the book is published.

**BARR EVALUATION GRANT  
FINAL REPORT AUG.2011 - DEC. 2013**

Budgeted amt.

Amt. spent

**Grant #  
4116**

Budget

Personnel	35,000	\$37,813.18
Consultants	30,000	\$27,781.10
Telephone,Copy,COGI	2,500	\$2,587.54
Indirect	7,500	\$6,818.18
Total	75,000	\$75,000.00

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Heifetz, R.A., & Laurie, D.L. (1999). Mobilizing adaptive work: Beyond visionary leadership. In J.A. Conger, G.M. Spreitzer, & E.E. Lawler, III (Eds.), *The leader's change handbook: An essential guide to setting direction and taking action* (pp. 58-86). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

xi In 1895, Booker T. Washington gave what later came to be known as the Atlanta Compromise speech before the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta. His address was one of the most important and influential speeches in American history, guiding African-American resistance to white discrimination and establishing Washington as one of the leading black spokesmen in America. Washington's speech stressed accommodation rather than resistance to the racist order under which Southern African Americans lived. In this speech he uttered those famous words, "cast down your bucket where you are."