

## Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee

**Meeting Date:** October 30, 2025

### **External Participants:**

Kendra Nenia – Higher Education and Workforce Development Navigator, 4-C of DeKalb

Susie Carrington – Regional Council Manager for Region 16, Birth to Five Illinois

Steve Kimmel – Early Childhood Education Teacher, Kishwaukee Education Consortium (KEC)

Kristin Schulz – Executive Director of the Child Development and Family Center, Northern Illinois University (NIU)

Rachael Engel – Director, Walnut Street Daycare Center

Aaron Confer – Youth Development Director, Kishwaukee Family YMCA

- Revision of Communication Skills Courses for A.A.S. Degrees
  - Based on advisory committee feedback, English and Communications departments are working to improve upon existing courses to better prepare students for communication in the professional world.
  - Discussion included emphasizing the need for better perspective-taking skills, conflict resolution, giving and receiving professional feedback, active listening and the importance of empathy for differing cultural and generational perspectives.
- Program Updates
  - Credit for Prior Learning
    - Will utilize Perkins grant funds to implement trainings related to credit for prior learning for ECE through the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) and the Competency-Based Education Network (C-BEN).
  - ECE 280 Practicum Improvement
    - Will utilize Perkins grant funds to implement revisions for procedures and documentation related to the ECE clinical practicum.
- Partner Updates
  - Illinois Department of Early Childhood: The new Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC) is offering listening sessions for faculty and staff at higher education institutions and other early childhood stakeholders. The new website makes resources readily accessible for providers across the state.
  - External partners discussed the challenge of offering face-to-face classes while also meeting the scheduling needs of students. Kimmel (KEC) emphasized the need for students to have direct experience with children.
  - Partners discussed the trend of students choosing not to work in a classroom setting. Schulz (NIU) proposed that many students feel dissuaded from

classroom settings for many reasons including unpredictability, emotional regulation required for the position and low current pay for such positions that does not provide a livable wage.