

Northern Lights Career Development Center for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals  
Final Start-up Report to the Child Development Division, Department for Children and Families  
Vermont Agency of Human Services  
August 30, 2005

In November of 2004, the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council (VCCICC) and the Community College of Vermont (CCV) were granted the contract to develop the Northern Lights Career Development Center for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals (herein after “Northern Lights Career Development Center”). This report will serve as final documentation of the work accomplished by the Northern Lights Career Development Center Staff during the start-up period, January 31 through June 1, 2005. A financial report is also included. The format will follow the stipulated **Subrecipient Activities in Attachment A: Scope of Work to be Performed** of the Department for Children and Families contract (Grant #CCV-2005).

### 1. Program Director and Coordinators are hired

On January 31, 2005, Adam Deyo was hired as Program Director for the Northern Lights Career Development Center. Adam graduated from University of Vermont with a Master's degree in Educational Leadership. Adam has been a Primary/Mentor Teacher at the Campus Children's Center in the Early Childhood Program at UVM, an Interim Director for the Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to use Technology (PT3 Grant) and has taught for CCV in the Early Childhood Education Program.

On March 14, 2005, Kate Giusti assumed the role of full-time Coordinator. Kate Giusti recently completed her masters program in Adult Learning at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she connected to the early childhood community as a research assistant for a study on Head Start families. Previously, Kate has developed early childhood programs in the Pacific Northwest with a focus on community development and anti-poverty work and has worked as a VISTA volunteer to support and train literacy volunteers.

On March 21, 2005, Kerrie Workman assumed the role of part-time Coordinator. Kerrie Workman holds two masters degrees, one in International Education and Development, and the other in Counseling Psychology. She has worked for 15 years as a local and international educator/advocate in the areas of child and youth welfare, international human rights, and non-profit management. She recently founded Red Consulting Services and consults with organizations, school districts, individuals, and businesses to ignite their creative energy in support of children and youth.

Dawn Crowe was hired as a part-time Records Specialist on June 16, 2005. She brings a great deal of experience that will contribute to her work with data entry and other clerical tasks.

In July of 2005, Kerrie Workman resigned from her position as Coordinator. On August 15, 2005, Erica Green was hired to fill the vacant position. Erica is a graduate of Bank Street College's Masters Degree program in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. After receiving her degree, she taught kindergarten and first/second grade for six years. Erica maintains her office in Montpelier with Kate Giusti.

Each of the new staff members were hired through a collaborative process with input from the Executive Director of the VCCICC and its Board members, the Associate Academic Dean, Provost and President of CCV, a Lyndon State Early Childhood Education Faculty member, two Child Development Division representatives, and the Northern Lights Career Development Center Director. The Director is based in CCV's Waterbury offices, while the two coordinators are based in CCV's Montpelier offices.

## **2. Activities are integrated within and coordinated with the Bright Futures Information System**

In order to coordinate and integrate all activities with the Bright Futures Information System (BFIS), the Northern Lights Career Development Center Director holds standing weekly meetings with Jan Walker of the Child Development Division. These meetings result in further consultation with the CDD staff that develop and maintain the BFIS. As a result, there is a collaborative effort to utilize and modify the BFIS system for professional development information dissemination. In addition, we have contracted with Dave MacLeay, a database developer, for the Northern Lights Instructor Registry. He is in contact with BFIS administrators to ensure that the two systems are integrated. Pilot programs are underway to test both the Professional Development Calendar tool and the Resume tool for individual educators. The BFIS system is also an integral facet of our conversations with stakeholders about the unified professional development system.

## **3. Outreach activities with CCRand R agencies, CDD and other community and agency partners are conducted**

The Northern Lights Career Development Center staff has extensively provided outreach to CCR&R agencies, the CDD, and other community and agency partners. In order to best communicate with regional partners, the staff has divided the state into two primary areas of responsibility. Kate Giusti maintains connections with six Agency of Human Services districts: Middlebury, Rutland, Bennington, Brattleboro, White River Junction, and Springfield. Adam Deyo is responsible for the Barre, Morrisville, Burlington, St. Albans, Newport, and St. Johnsbury districts.

On two separate dates, July 26 and August 16, 2005, the Northern Lights Career Development Center convened Resource Development Specialists for a professional development opportunity focusing on the Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals, the Standard Adult Orientation, and the Level I Fundamentals consistent curriculum. Five Advisory Board members outside of the Resource Development Specialist community also attended one of the all-day sessions. Each participant received copies of the three documents, a resource book (**Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject** by Melvin L. Silberman and Mel Silberman), and training on implementing the curricula in their communities. Follow-up for this offering has occurred through email, the Northern Lights Career Development Center website (<http://northernlights.vsc.edu/levelone.html>), and through an online classroom discussion board (<http://nicenet.org>)

We are in consistent communication with regional early childhood workforce representatives, usually talking weekly. The Director also participates in monthly conference calls with Resource Development Specialists and Child Development Division representatives. In addition to individual and group meetings with regional agency representatives either on the phone or in person, the staff has participated in the Resource Development Specialist semi-annual meeting on April 14, 2005, presented at the both of the Vermont Department of Education's Early Learning Conferences, joined the monthly Early Childhood Steering Committee meetings, the Professional Preparation and Development (PPD) Committee meetings, the Child Development Division's Professional Development Think Tank, the Vermont School Age Care Network, the Vermont Children's Forum legislative meetings, the Higher Education Collaborative, the Vermont Early Childhood Educator Licensing (VECEL) Project, the Vermont and National Association for the Education of Young Children (V/NAEYC) and other formal gatherings. We have been in contact with larger organizations such as the National Center for Children and Families, the National Child Care Information Center, and the National Registry Alliance to talk about our work. The Director also attended the National Registry Alliance conference from July 18-21 to collaborate with thirty other states that are running career development centers.

Use of the Northern Lights Career Development Center website has also been a constructive strategy for maintaining communication with stakeholders. The formal site (<http://northernlightscdc.org>) was launched in March 2005 by the Director and continues to grow. Marketing Partners of Burlington revised the site in June to meet the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. As of August 26, 2005, there have been 1,030 unique visitors to the site. Subsequently, the Northern Lights Career Development Center Advisory Board is convened on a monthly basis for updates and guidance on the development of the project. In addition, the first Review Board sub-committee on Instructor Qualifications was held on April 30. This group will report to the full Advisory Board and brief the PPD. Individual webpages were developed for the Advisory Board, Review Board, and the Resource Development Specialist Community to distribute documents and post meeting notes (e.g. <http://northernlights.vsc.edu/advisory.html>). These sites serve as further documentation of the evolution of the Northern Lights Career Development Center project. Updates on progress are disseminated through the Early Childhood Steering Committee listserv and are intentionally copied to individuals who forward the updates to their local lists.

We were also asked to organize a "Professional Development for Early Childhood and Afterschool Educators in Vermont" presentation for the Early Childhood Steering Committee on May 19. The presentation was subsequently posted on our website. We also participated in the Head Start Professional Development Collaboration meeting in late May and subsequently met with Central Vermont Community Action's Head Start managers to help develop their professional development plan for 2005-2006. We will also be presenting our work to CCV's President's Council and the VCCICC governing board in September.

This comprehensive approach to outreach has resulted in the participation of a wide range of stakeholders in the process of developing the Northern Lights Career Development Center. Please see our website for a full listing of Advisory Board members and other activities.

#### **4. Core Competencies are developed that are aligned with Northern Lights Core Areas of Knowledge and are designated according to levels from entry level to advanced**

Work on the Northern Lights Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals began in the Spring of 2004 by a sub-group of the PPD committee. The Director of the Northern Lights Career Development Center joined the work group on February 9 and Coordinators began assisting in May. The collaborative work resulted in the finalization of the draft competencies. The document was then provided to the public for comment via the Northern Lights Career Development Center website. A survey for feedback was designed using the Survey Monkey tool: <http://surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=31420887860>. Fifteen respondents utilized the tool to provide feedback and two others sent their input through email. The feedback was compiled and presented to the Core Competency work-group on May 17. The group met again on June 13<sup>th</sup> and June 21<sup>st</sup> to process the remaining feedback and the result is a formal document that will provide the foundation for the majority of the Northern Lights Career Development Center's objectives. This work provides consensus on the knowledge, skills and dispositions that educators in Vermont should maintain from Level I through Level III of their professional career.

The statewide rollout of the competencies began with the professional development gatherings for Resource Development Specialists in July and August. We have also placed targeted phone calls to regional Early Childhood Councils, Success by Six Coordinators, and Head Start Directors. The full document is posted on our website (<http://northernlights.vsc.edu/corecomp.html>) and plans to print the document through Marketing Partners are in place. An announcement postcard will be mailed to individual programs and we will be traveling to regions to talk about the document with stakeholders in the Fall.

**5. High quality professional development opportunities that already exist within the state that meet core competencies will be reviewed for approval under the Northern Lights System**

The BFIS Course Calendar System will be utilized to conduct this imperative work. We have been working closely with Jan Walker and BFIS technical staff to facilitate data entry and quality so that we can conduct a comprehensive assessment of statewide professional development opportunities. Dawn Crowe, our Records Specialist, receives regional professional development calendars that are aligned with Core Knowledge Areas and enters them into the BFIS system. Dawn will also be responsible for entering attendance records into the system as well.

When the data in the Course Calendar tool is consistent, we will begin to perform a more formal review.

**6. A consistent curriculum is developed and implemented for Level I**

Kate Giusti and Kerrie Workman have developed a consistent Level I curriculum in collaboration with Resource Development Specialists, Rebecca Werner of CCV, Daphne Moritz of the VCCICC, faculty in the University of Vermont's Early Childhood Program, members of the PPD and Adam Deyo. The curriculum builds from existing syllabi from "Foundations" course offerings in the state, the Vermont Child Care Apprenticeship Program courses, the University of Vermont's Early Childhood Education courses, and CCV's Great Beginnings workshop for Adult Education. New articles/resources for instructors to disseminate during the class compliment the syllabus (copyright has been purchased for each article). The first meetings of this group took place on May 10 and continued into the summer until the document was completed.

The syllabus was disseminated in a "Training of Trainer" model for Resource Development Specialists across the state on July 26 and August 16, 2005. These sessions included a review of the content that covers all Level I Core Competencies across the five Core Knowledge Areas. It also provided participants with additional skills and knowledge in adult learning theory and practice. Support for individuals to become instructors of the forty-five hour Level I course in their communities was also offered. The curriculum is available online (<http://northernlights.vsc.edu/levelone.html>) and will remain a living document as input from the field is gathered after implementation.

**7. CDC program coordinators are trained in skills standards in ECE and curriculum design**

The Northern Lights Career Development Center Coordinators have been trained in skills standards and curriculum design. Both Kate and Kerrie have extensive backgrounds in both of these areas, however, relevant materials such as the Vermont Early Learning Standards, the Northern Lights Core Competencies, the Vermont Child Care Apprenticeship Program syllabi, Observation and Constructive Feedback tools, University of Vermont syllabi and other Vermont Agency of Human Services and Department of Education policy documents have been an integral piece of their training. CCV's "Great Beginnings" program, the Blackboard online course tool and subsequent hybrid resources and activities have also added to the wealth of pertinent information. Texts and websites on constructivist approaches to learning, the Municipal Infant-Toddler and Preschool programs of Reggio Emilia and subsequent Reggio inspired American contexts, along with pertinent research from the field are utilized as well. Reference to these materials will occur in the Level One offering. Erica Green is reviewing these resources and meetings are scheduled to further discuss the content and build on her current knowledge.

Kate Giusti took the lead on coordinating with the Afterschool professional communities in the state during the start-up period. She worked closely with Ruth Matthews of the Child Development Division

and other stakeholders. Many of the above resources are relevant to this constituency, but other specific materials such as standards for quality school-age care from the National Afterschool Association (formerly the National School-Age Care Alliance), the Harvard Family Research Project, National Institute on Out-of-School Time, and materials piloted by other states are guiding our work. Adam Deyo is now the primary contact for Afterschool initiatives, as Kate takes on new tasks in the Operational year. He is a member of the newly formed Child Development Division afterschool professional development group led by Kerrie Workman.

#### **8. A collaborative hiring process for instructors is developed as per proposal**

The development of Instructor Qualifications began with a sub-group of the PPD in 2002. Draft recommendations were created with input with other state initiatives across the nation and presented to the PPD for comment. A second draft was created in response to feedback from the committee and at that point the initiative ended due to lack of time for the extensive work needed to move forward with the recommendations. The Northern Lights Career Development Center, with the support of original sub-group members, Janice Stockman and Jan Walker of the Child Development Division, began circulating the document to various groups such as the Resource Development Specialist community, the Advisory Board, regional provider leader groups and Early Childhood Councils. All of the feedback was compiled to inform the next steps toward creating a final document. The Review Board Sub-Committee on Instructor Qualifications met on April 30 to begin discussing the feedback. The charge of the board is as follows:

- i. Review, revise, and finalize Instructor Qualifications
- ii. Create criteria for Instructor Database with technical developer;
- iii. Create criteria and process for qualifying instructors; and
- iv. Review and approve applications for qualified Instructors.

A following meeting occurred on June 10 with the opportunity to further discuss the questions from the field in an online forum (<http://nicenet.org>). The group continued to meet throughout the summer and finalized the draft qualifications, which can be found on the review board's webpage (<http://northernlights.vsc.edu/reviewboard.htm>). A collaborative process for hiring instructors will evolve from this sub-committee. In addition, the Instructor Registry will be an added benefit for those seeking qualified instructors. The mock-up can be viewed on this webpage: <http://northernlights.vsc.edu/instructor-registry/>. The final product will be housed in BFIS.

#### **9. CCV's 12 academic coordinators are informed of the VCCICC/CCV Northern Lights Career Development Center goals and their role in the development, coordination and support of it.**

Outreach to CCV's Academic Coordinators has also been a focus of the Northern Lights Career Development Center Staff. Through site visits in Brattleboro, Middlebury, and Montpelier, IP Video conferences with Burlington and the Online Learning coordinator and phone conversations with other sites, our staff has outlined the scope of work that is ongoing and its correlation to their work as coordinators. In addition, CCV-wide emails have been disseminated with information about Northern Lights and individual coordinators are copied on updates to the Advisory Board. As a result, Academic Coordinators have begun calling us to seek information on professional development pathways such as the CDA, the Vermont Child Care Apprenticeship Program, CCV Early Childhood courses, and articulation/transfer credit questions. This group of dedicated coordinators will be another crucial facet of our efforts to support Level I, II, and III educators on the Northern Lights Career Development Center continuum.

**10. Preliminary Identification of special certificates/credentials and the related group and organizations working on these certificates that will become part of the Northern Lights Career Development Center.**

Through collaboration with Jan Walker of the Child Development Division, Sue Ryan of the Vermont Child Care Apprenticeship Program and the BFIS system consultants, the first identification of a Northern Lights Career Development Center credential area has occurred. The identified group of educators has participated in all six of the Apprenticeship Program college courses through CCV, but has not necessarily participated as apprentices. According to the Northern Lights continuum, these professionals are in Level III. After the Northern Lights Career Ladder for Early Childhood Professionals is developed, this pilot group will be contacted in order to begin utilizing the BFIS system to document their related professional development information in the “Resume” function. Northern Lights staff and the Child Development Division will support their work. The professionals will eventually be presented with a Level III certificate to be prominently displayed in their schools and will be recognized at conferences and other gatherings. The intent is that this process will inspire others to begin utilizing the BFIS system in this manner and in turn, be celebrated for their accomplishments. Other credentials/certificates will be developed by the Northern Lights Career Development Center as a result.

**11. Include CDD grant administrator in hiring and policy and practice decisions that are modifications of the approved proposal and communicate weekly regarding grant activities**

As stated above, the Director of the Northern Lights Career Development Center meets weekly with Jan Walker of the Child Development Division in addition to other scheduled and informal meetings with CDD staff. Hiring, policy, and practice decisions will include input for CDD staff (through the Advisory Board, Review Board, and other initiatives).

Please see the attached budget information regarding expenditures for the start-up period of this grant. The budget does not include the generous donation of goods, technical services and infrastructure, and advising by the Community College of Vermont and the Vermont Child Care Industry and Careers Council. Without their support, the Northern Lights Career Development Center would not be able to operate at its current capacity.

The work of the Career Development Center is crucial to the improvement, alignment, and unification of professional development for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals. We are deeply grateful for the support of the Child Development Division of the Department for Children and Families, Vermont Agency of Human Services.