

**Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center
for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals**

Mid-year Update on Activity SUMMARY for FY08 (July 1, 2007 – Dec. 31, 2007)

Jan. 15, 2008

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 Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center for Early Childhood and Afterschool Professionals (herein after “Northern Lights”). This report updates the activity of the Vermont Northern Lights staff for the first half of the FY08 fiscal year: July 1 - Dec. 31, 2007.

Changes in Northern Lights staff since the last report:

During this first half of this fiscal year, the new Coordinator (Maureen Young McCarthy) completed her orientation and took on more responsibilities. Two part- time Records Specialists (RS III and II) were hired, oriented and began work in November and December 2007, respectively.

Vermont Northern Lights work on the nine goals include:

1. Development and maintenance of career pathways for early childhood and school age professionals spanning entry to advanced levels of education and experience.

Career Pathways work took several forms over the past six months. Extensive work was done on Level I of the career ladder. In addition a core competency review committee was created and examined all the levels of the career ladder and lattice and how they fit together. Finally the Career ladder itself was edited on the Northern Lights website to make it more accessible and help inform readers about its alignment with professional development opportunities.

The work on Level I and II during this half of the year involved a) support and evaluation of the current Fundamentals course (specifically as a non-credit course), b) work with the Family Center of Washington County and other partners to revise the Fundamentals course to better include practice and understanding of the Child Development Associate Credential, and c) improvement on the use of ITV as a delivery method for the Fundamentals course. Professional development opportunities linked to Level II of the Career Ladder continued to be offer by the regional Resource Development Specialists.

This past fall Northern Lights helped the Resource Development Specialists and others offer the Fundamentals course in 8 regions: two sites (Lamoille and Montpelier) used Interactive Television (ITV) as a delivery model and the other 6 other sites offered face-to- face classes (Chittenden, Middlebury, St Albans, St Johnsbury, Springfield and Bennington (through CCV)). A total of 119 students planned to take the classes. Preliminary data from instructors and students at the end of the class, indicate that the ITV course was very successful (100% would take classes through ITV again). This is especially heartening since 30% of the students in the ITV class last spring, would not. We feel this is in large part due to the experienced instructor who also set up three face to face classes as part of the series of 15 weeks. The ITV classes used the revised Fundamentals curriculum and the other six classes used the 2005 curriculum; of these four added the new the observation of the practitioner component. The new Fundamentals course now includes a component requiring

practitioners to be observed. It also includes better integration of practice of Child Development Associate components, guidance on including parent presenters, clearer expectations of sponsors and instructors, and clearer course structure with guidance. These changes were made to provide greater consistency without taking away from the need to be responsive to the regional needs and individual students in the class. Also, resources have been added to the original course website.

Other work by Northern Lights in support of the Fundamentals class included the following:

- A recommendation was submitted to the Community College of Vermont Social Sciences and Education Committee to purge the Fundamentals course from the CCV course list, after extensive discussions with RDS, Jan Walker and others. CCV will make a final decision before July 1, 2008. Follow up discussions about this decision were held in Bennington and with individuals.
- Northern Lights website was updated to better reflect Fundamentals course work and Level I, & II (coursework plus experience). An application to receive the Level I certificate was created and used.

The Northern Lights website was extensively updated to make the career ladder components more accessible and current. Recently an extensive addition about the Child Development Associate Credential was added with links from several places in the website.

Northern Lights staff were also active with a number of state-wide committees working on alignment of professional development so that early childhood and after school professionals could learn about and find the professional development activities they needed and would understand how these could support career goals.

2. Design, implementation, and oversight of a competency-based core knowledge training and continuing education programs.

Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals: Twenty-three professionals from a wide range of experiences and backgrounds met three times to review the early childhood core competencies, and provide perspective on the career ladder, pathways, and alignment with other competency documents in Vermont. A summary of the results and feedback on next steps, will be shared with the PPD committee in January and April 2008.

Northern Lights continued to include core competencies information in its trainings and presentations to local and regional groups, and to distribute the competencies, as requested. We did presentations on both the afterschool and early childhood competencies at conferences, staff meetings and to small groups. We were pleased that VCCICC recently decided to align the Apprenticeship courses, including On the Job Training with the Northern Lights early childhood and afterschool core competencies. We are currently examining how the Afterschool, early childhood, and early childhood mental health competencies align with the program director credential.

Northern Lights staff had a leadership role on the committee responsible for Vermont's Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies. This year there has been active distribution of the competencies regionally, statewide and nationally, using a powerpoint, workshops, a brochure and small meetings.

- 3. Establishment of quality assurance systems for training and instructor approval.**
- 4. Establishment of instructor networks for identification, support, and continuing education of instructors:**

Since January 2006 when it began, over 200 professionals have connected to the Instructor Registry and over 150 have been approved. Instructors are listed at all levels of the registry (specialist, affiliate I, II, certified and master instructor) and are available to teach in all parts of the state. All but one of them used the web-based application, with help as needed from Vermont Northern Lights staff and BFIS. There is fairly even distribution of instructors available to provide instruction in each Core Knowledge Area.

Over the past six months we fully incorporated afterschool professionals into the registry and continue to do outreach to this group to join the registry. We also updated our outreach materials about the registry and re-ordered the Instructor Qualification system to better represent Specialists. We presented on the registry nationally at the National Registry Alliance conference. We also worked with VAEYC to help all their conference presenters get in the registry, to add an instructor track to the conference offerings this year, and give instructors in the registry free admittance to the evening reception at the conference. We worked with VSACN and the Afterschool care conference to also inform their presenters about the registry and especially the (after school) Mentors for Quality.

We conducted a brief survey of applicants who had not completed the application process to determine what barriers we might address to help them move toward completion. The primary barrier was getting the BFIS Q and C ID number. This and the changes to ensure better security in BFIS, led us to discontinue the requirement that Instructor registry applicants also have a BFIS ID in order to apply. Instead, we are helping Instructors join BFIS after they are in the registry. We also streamlined access to information about the registry and the application so it is directly accessible either from our website or the BFIS home page, instead of only the BFIS homepage. Decisions of the approval panel continue to be documented on the instructor registry panel website internally, and changes made are reflected on the Northern Lights website and on the Instructor application.

Instructors in the system started receiving certificates from Vermont Northern Lights in January 2007 and continue to do so. The required orientation to adult learning was offered once in the last six months and we are in the process of training others to offer this workshop.

5. Development and maintenance of partnerships with institutions of higher education.

Northern Lights created a document showing how certain college courses are aligned to meet multiple purposes: apprenticeship courses, CCV child care certificate, AA degree, director credential and proposed after school credential. This information is being shared with multiple audiences and CCV coordinators specifically, as a planning tool.

Vermont Northern Lights staff identified individual meetings with CCV coordinators as a priority for outreach with higher education and has started having those meetings.

6. Development and distribution of state-awarded credentials in Infant/Toddler, director, School Age Care and Early Childhood and Family Mental Health.

The role of credentials in the system of professional development was highlighted by Northern Lights staff in several arenas this past 6 months. Northern Lights staff created a map of current “professional development recognition and enhancement” describing the incentives and supports along the entire Northern Lights career ladder and credential system. This work was discussed at the multiple meetings and is being used to review the impact and consider potential changes to the system of recognition in Vermont. The early childhood core competency review committee discussed and clarified a) that credentials recognize knowledge and skills in an area of specialty (as defined by the NCCICC); and b) credentials should be grounded in the core competencies but may include additional competencies. The credential creation process document created by Northern Lights a year ago is still being used to guide the credential process in several groups.

Northern Lights staff are active on the committee creating Vermont’s Infant Toddler Learning Standards, which will help inform an Infant Toddler Credential in the future.

The Program Director Credential committee, led by Northern Lights staff, continues to be active and growing. Twenty –four professionals applied for and received Step One of the Program Director Credential in August. A number of applications for Step One and one application for Step Two have been received since. Recently the committee reviewed its work over the past years and decided to define its purpose more clearly, identify the competencies related to this credential and to get broader input, especially from program directors. Both the after school and early childhood perspectives continue to be important to the development and outreach of the credential.

The fifth and sixth courses: *Human Resources*, and *Legal and Financial Issues*, which are part of Step Two of the credential, will be offered for college credit again this spring and summer, with some financial support from Northern Lights. Information about available courses that provide equivalency for this credential continued to be identified, distributed and posted on the Northern Lights Website. In addition, information about the credential was shared nationally at the pre-conference meeting at the NAEYC conference. The review committee holds notes and documents its decisions on its special website.

The School Age Care Credential is in development by the Afterschool Framework committee, which includes active Vermont Northern Lights representation. (*see also goal 2*)

The Early Childhood Family Mental Health Credential committee includes leadership and participation from Northern Lights’ staff. The committee is currently exploring consideration of the parameters and usefulness of a credential. To support this, Northern Lights staff are designing a survey and holding interviews. (*see also goal 2*)

7. Career advising for early childhood and school age professionals

Career advising information was shared in a variety of venues. Individual conversations, small meetings, and workshops continued to provide outreach on the Career Advising Guide for early childhood professionals to a wide range of direct staff, advisors, directors and other professionals

both across Vermont and Nationally. Vermont Northern Lights staff regularly field phone calls and emails from professionals seeking career advising. The updated Northern Lights brochure and the dissemination of The Vermont Guide to Early Childhood Careers and Planning Your Professional Growth, and the three competency documents continue to be referenced and distributed. (*see also Goal one*)

8. Contribute to ensuring data integrity regarding professional development components in the Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) through data entry and coordination of efforts with CDD and the BFIS.

Northern Lights staff continued to do presentations to students, administrators and program staff about the best way to access and use the BFIS Quality and Credential area and the Calendar to support their professional development. These workshops complimented the workshops on Career Advising that we do. In addition, we updated our website to better explain the use of BFIS, and will continue to do so. Northern Lights continued to actively participate in the Streamline committee, begun in January 2007. We recently decided to pilot a streamlined system in January 2008, entering data on all the documents an individual might need for their professional development.

9. Work with CDD and community child care support agencies to ensure coordinated delivery of Level I and II training statewide.

(see goal 1 above, detailing specific Level I and II coursework supports)