

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

**Mid-year Update on Activity for FY09 (July 1, 2008 – Dec. 31, 2008)**

**SUMMARY**

**The work by Vermont Northern Lights in the past six months on the 11 CDD specified grant activities (numbered below) are as follows:**

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

**# 7. Career advising for early childhood and school age professionals**

**# 11. Work with CDD, community child care support agencies and other CDD designated partners to ensure coordinated delivery of level I and level II training statewide.**

Northern Lights staff continued to actively work with our partners to stay informed and promote alignment of career pathways for early childhood and afterschool professionals. We participate in numerous state-wide committees that address professional development. It is anticipated that when STARS and the licensed programs regulations are approved, and the revised bonus system accepted, that it will be easier to describe and promote the alignment with Northern Lights Career Ladder. In addition, since the last reporting period Northern Lights staff had 3 in-depth discussions with staff and the board president of VCCICC to ensure that Northern Lights understood the goals and plans of VCCICC and how we can ensure alignment of our work together. This fall Northern Lights facilitated the receipt of a letter from VCCICC to all the students who had completed all six of the Apprenticeship contracted courses, with information about the Program Director Credential, the CCV Child Care Certificate and the Associates degree program. Northern Lights staff also worked with the PPD and the Building Bright Futures (BBF) committee to plan and incorporate professional development issues and perspectives at the BBF workday last November. The perspectives gained from this meeting are helping guide Northern Lights and the PPD. CDD and Northern Lights now align opportunities so that bonus applicants are also informed of a streamlined process to receive their related Level certificate. In another arena, the Early Childhood Family Mental Health committee and Northern Lights are working with the Children's Integrated Services committee and the Foundation of Early Learning leadership team to align their professional development activities with the Northern Lights system and the career ladder. Northern Lights also presented a "train the trainer" at the July 2008 PPD meeting about career advising and the Career Advising Guide. Finally, Northern Lights worked with the Vermont Department of Education Website and the new BBF website to ensure inclusion of accurate and helpful information about professional development and specifically Northern Lights resources.

Vermont Northern Lights staff regularly field phone calls and emails from professionals seeking career advising. In the past 6 months we have presented 7 specific trainings on career development. Individual meetings were held with administrators of licensed programs, Head Start and CCV and information distributed by email. We continue to disseminate and reference the updated Vermont Guide to Early Childhood Careers, Planning Your Professional Growth, the three Competency documents and the Northern Lights fact sheets. Northern Lights staff also dedicated time to the Professional Preparation and Development committee (PPD) professional development survey. With

672 returns (279 paper and the rest electronic) we are now in the process of working with a subcommittee of the PPD to analyze the results in detail.

Outreach about Career pathways and Northern Lights resources increased. Last July an article about Northern Lights was in the CCV newsletter. The Northern Lights quarterly e-newsletter started distribution last spring and the third edition was distributed this past December. It includes information about current and upcoming activities; highlights changes to the Northern Lights website; recognizes completion of Northern Lights levels and credentials; and addresses frequently asked questions that we hear from the field. It is distributed to more than 10 distribution lists and individuals and posted on the website. We know it is having an impact because of the calls and emails we get from people and programs who read the newsletter. The 9 fact sheets (one on the career ladder/lattice, one on competencies, four on the career levels, one on BFIS and two on credentials/registry) were placed on the website and distribution began. Northern Lights led over 30 trainings and presentations for Head Start staff, provider groups, program staff, CCV advisors, agency staff and regional child care trainings. Northern Lights website continues to be well used. In data collected between January 1, 2008 and Dec. 12, 2008, there have been 23,993 unique visitors, with range of 1800+ to over 2500 hits each month. The website is also used as a reference in early childhood classes at CCV. Unique hits to the Northern Lights website have more than doubled, each of the last three years since data was collected.

Northern Lights staff continue to work closely with the Resource Development Specialists (RDS) through the monthly RDS conference calls, attending their statewide meetings, regular emails and calls to the group and to individuals; and distributing information for them to pass on to their constituencies. Northern Lights staff gain RDS perspective in numerous committee meetings, keep the RDS informed of our work, and seek their input and recommendations.

The work on Level I, and Fundamentals specifically during this half of the fiscal year involved a) creation and distribution of the final report on last fiscal year's Fundamentals courses; b) slight revisions to the Fundamentals information and addition of resources to the website, based on instructor and RDS recommendations c) distribution of CDA booklets to all RDS to use in Fundamentals and other classes; d) support and development of 14 Fundamentals courses for FY09 - with 5 new instructors, 4 sites using ITV format and 2 using (new) CCV workshops format; e) initiation and facilitation of 2 conference calls with sponsors and instructors to inform them and share best practices among them; f) creation and use of an implementation checklist for Fundamentals sponsors and instructors; g) face to face course support, instructor interviews and evaluation of the fall Fundamentals courses; h) streamlining of the processes to receive information from the course sponsors and enter it on the website and into BFIS calendar and resume; i) presentation on Fundamentals with child care licensors and a draft of an equivalency process for Fundamentals shared with key decision makers; j) individual career advising on Level I and 13 Level I certificates issued in the past 6 months.

Work on adapting Level II curricula was discussed with RDS last spring and this fall. A number of key partners helped with the development and piloting of 7 new modules, based in part on the previous modules and on the Level II early childhood core competencies. This draft will be shared with RDS in February 2009. Eight Level II certificates were awarded during the past 6 months. There were three Level III certificates issued in the past 6 months.

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

Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals: The 2008 revised edition was printed and posted on the Northern Lights website and is being distributed. In addition, the self-assessment tool section was also posted on the website as a writable PDF and printable tool.

Northern Lights staff had a leadership role on the committee responsible for Vermont's Early Childhood and Family Mental Health Competencies. There continued to be active distribution of the competencies regionally, statewide and nationally. The competencies were also added to the Documentation of Professional Development Form and used at the Foundation of Early Learning training and other trainings.

Program Director Competencies for early childhood and afterschool professionals are in their final draft. The tasks being completed are: the review process from multiple perspectives – including many program directors and potential directors, the addition of examples and finalizing the accompanying narrative.

Northern Lights staff continue to participate in the statewide committee developing Infant and Toddler guidelines, which are the precursors to the Infant Toddler credential.

## **# 3. Establishment of quality assurance systems for training and instructor approval.**

## **# 4. Establishment of instructor and mentor/assessor networks for identification, support and continuing education of instructors, mentors and assessors.**

Since January 2006 when it began, 190 instructors have been approved and many more have connected to the Instructor Registry. In the past 6 months, 43 new instructors were approved (10 Affiliate, 17 Specialist, 7 Certified, 9 Master Levels), which is almost equal to the number of approved instructors in all of last year. Instructors are listed at all levels of the registry (specialist, affiliate I, II, certified and master instructor), are available to teach in all parts of the state, with instructors available to provide instruction in each Core Knowledge Area.

For the past 6 months Northern Lights staff with the Instructor Registry approval panel, have been working with consultants to update and revise the Instructor Registry website, and to fine tune wording. In the past six months we added a document to the public website to help prepare applicants; held an “instructor registry party” for perspective applicants; conducted an “orientation to adult learning” workshop; gained additional instructors to teach that required workshop; and recognized instructors at conferences. We also completed work on an instructor observation tool. Establishment of mentor/assessor networks has been more challenging. A compilation of current individual and program supports was created with the help of Northern Lights and reviewed by the PPD. The formal supportive observation component is fully integrated into the Fundamentals class and when implemented, and we are collating the data collected about that now. Two observations of students will be incorporated into the draft Level II modules. Northern Lights is preparing to form a committee to outline and implement a consultant registry.

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

Northern Lights completed a year long process of having individual meetings with every regional Community College of VT (CCV) site. As a result of these meetings often connections between the local RDS and CCV early childhood advisor are enhanced, and there are increased phone calls to Northern Lights by CCV students and advisors.

Northern Lights staff are working with the Higher Education Collaborative to fully incorporate the early childhood and autism courses into the BFIS course calendar. A meeting of higher education institution representatives presented at the PPD last June for the second year and another discussion is planned for the June PPD 2009 meeting. The Southern New Hampshire University program in community mental health is our newest partner. They are willing to offer a cohort course for non-degree graduate students in early childhood mental health that aligns with the Early Childhood and Family Mental Health competencies.

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

The Program Director Credential focused on a) completing the program director competencies; b) offering the legal and financial course online and c) developing the capstone course based on the competencies. There are a total of 41 Step One Program Director Credentials awarded (17 in the past year) and 5 new Step Two Credentials (all in the past year).

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 each semester.

The School Age Care Credential was presented at the Afterschool conference this past fall and is on the Northern Lights website. The Afterschool Foundation certificate will be posted on the website soon.

The Early Childhood Family Mental Health Credential is being outlined by the committee, based on the ECFMH competencies.. The committee aligned 8 curricula with the early childhood mental health competencies which will contribute to the credential. Two self-assessment tools (detailed and simpler) have also been designed from the competencies which can be used as part of the credential creation process.

#### **# 8. Coordination with and for Head Start Services and system, the Vermont Early Childhood Educator Licensure Project and other related initiatives designed to improve quality of child development services such as the Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) and Child Development Division Quality Enhancement Grants.**

Northern Lights staff works closely with Janice Stockman who is responsible for implementing this activity.

**# 9. Design a professional development framework specific to the needs of afterschool providers that is integrated into the Vermont Northern Lights Career Development Center.**

Northern Lights staff works closely with Kerrie Workman who is responsible for implementing this activity, as well as the Afterschool framework committee and the afterschool network.

**# 10. 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.**

Six months ago the first change order in BFIS related to professional development was implemented and the second change order is planned for January or February 2009. Northern Lights staff actively outlined the changes and is participating in reviewing the implementation. Northern Lights purchased a scanner and is ready to start a larger streamlined pilot once the change order is complete and scanned documents will be able to be stored in BFIS. We plan to pilot the streamlined system with STARS administrators in the next few months.

The record specialists have updated the Calendar and Attendance information from 2005 to present (the back log from 2005 thru 2007 entailed some 7000 entries from the Chittenden region alone). We are also continuing to work with RDS to ensure we have sufficient and timely information from calendars and attendance in a system that is mutually effective. Addresses are now updated from attendance sheets and there is regular contact with the help desk. Cards to new BFIS quality and credential holders are mailed every two weeks and a total of 879 cards have been mailed since February 2008. Five new sponsors have been added to the BFIS calendar in the past 4 months for a total of 54. Northern Lights staff led a total of 22 trainings, primarily group orientations, for staff and sponsors about the use of BFIS as a professional development tool. Presentations were to agencies like the Child Welfare Training partnership, Healthy Child Care Vermont, Head Start programs; the committees that work with Northern Lights and CDD staff; students in early childhood courses, program staff and regional trainings, and at the VAEYC conference. When possible these were connected to career advising and a walk through the resources on Northern Lights website.