

SIGNIFICANT IDEAS AND PROGRESSIVE CHANGE

by Gwen Morgan and Anne Mitchell



Ideas are not one-time “Eureka” moments, but are parts of concepts progressing forward. Sometimes years pass before ideas are implemented. They then resurface, connect with other ideas, and move policies ahead. Meanwhile, the idea remains alive in the field, influencing decisions and goals. Ideas build on one another when implemented.

Ms. Morgan has been at Wheelock College since 1972 as adjunct faculty, and as a leader in national research projects. Currently, she is Senior Fellow for Early Education and Care Policy. In her years in the field, Ms. Morgan has worked with others to found many new organizations, including: The KLH Child Development Center; The Advanced Management Seminars for Child Care Directors at Wheelock; The National Association of Regulatory Administrators (licensors); Work/Family Directions; Wheelock’s Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education; The Child Care Action Campaign; and The Forum on Professional Workforce Development at NAEYC.

Anne Mitchell is President of Early Childhood Policy Research (which is 21 years old) and co-founded the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance. She has written widely on early care and education policy, finance reform, and system-building. Anne was an Associate Dean at Bank Street College of Education in New York City and directed child care centers in Massachusetts and Vermont. She has worked with more than half of U.S. states and dozens of foundations, as well as with federal agencies and national organizations. Anne is a long-term elected member of the Greenville (NY) Board of Education and is a Past President of the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Our field generates many ideas. We chose to write about four that have built initial good ideas into implemented policies and partial solutions.

Idea 1: Progressive Professional Development

History: From the 1870s into the 1920s, child development programs emerged in cities and mill towns. Early childhood teachers, called ‘kindergartners,’ taught groups of children ages 2 to 7 and visited families. The Industrial Revolution drew families from farms into mills where both parents worked; sometimes children, too. Families lived in crowded tenements and children could no longer roam outdoors.

Training for ‘kindergartners’ evolved into colleges focused on early education. Wheelock was incorporated as a college in 1888; Bank Street in 1916; Erikson Institute in 1966. Tufts University adopted the former Nursery Training School as a Department in the 1930s. In 1923, the Carnegie Corporation funded certain universities and colleges to develop new early childhood degree programs.

T.E.A.C.H. was a big idea pioneered in 1974 by Day Care Services Association, Inc. in North Carolina. It is a college scholarship for the early childhood workforce to take courses and degrees. **WAGE\$**, a different program, was created to increase wages based on qualifications attained. These two separate ideas raise compensation and increase college completion. *T.E.A.C.H.’s* annual data shows that whenever a large number of participants received community college degrees, applications for four-year degrees expanded substantially and also that *T.E.A.C.H.* retains workforce diversity.

The Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential. In the 1970s, early childhood leaders, focused on improving the quality of programs nationwide, identified the knowledge and skills that

all classroom staff should have and developed a process for recognizing applicants who have those basic competencies. In 1975, the first group of applicants received the CDA credential from the Council for Professional Recognition. Today there are more than 275,000 who have achieved this beginning professional level, leading to quality improvement and also pursuit of progressive degrees from associate's to master's. The CDA is the start of a visible pathway toward higher education degrees and teaching certificates.

The leaking funnel. The diagram (fig. 1) represents the ever-growing early childhood workforce. At the top of the funnel, huge numbers of individuals enter the workforce as they apply for a job or seek training. Not all individuals enter the funnel from the top; some enter from the side by enrolling in a degree program or other credential if they can afford the cost. Many individuals leak out of the funnel, and out of the profession. Even those with degrees may leak out due to low wages.

Because the funnel leaks, only a handful of individuals graduate with degrees and stay in the field, represented by a small drip at the bottom of the funnel. Given the numbers entering the funnel,

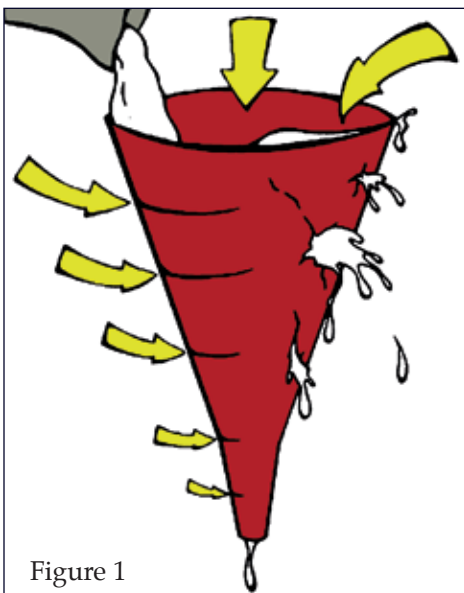


Figure 1

I have visited many families where there is a child of three years old; I played with them, talked with them, took food, told and read stories, and spent some pleasant time with children. It was great pleasure for me.

The result I got from the interview is very much varied from the children of rural and urban areas.

Children's replies from those staying in rural areas:

Pranto Das, 3 years, 6 months

From trees, flowers, clay/mud, and brother's school.

From dadu and dida (grandparents).

Children's replies from those staying in urban areas:

Shudha, 3 years, 1 month

Riding on different rides, see saw, wooden horse, animals.

Submitted by Majusree Mitra

World Forum National Representative Bangladesh

a larger number of degree applicants could be expected. But most need to work while they pursue their education. They cannot afford to pay for a four-year degree, and do not see themselves borrowing large sums of money to do it. If the many individuals who enter the workforce could see a visible pathway in the funnel, applicants for the bachelor's degree could increase dramatically.

A big idea at Honolulu Community College. A dean at the Community College responded to the leaking funnel with a big idea. The college modularized the CDA, and offered the modules free to students to take at their own pace. Those who had taken all eight modules (plus several integrative modules) could apply for the CDA certificate, paying the fee. When the CDA is awarded, it will count for credits toward the associate's degree.

The Early Childhood Registry in Wisconsin and other ideas. The Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) developed the first progressive Professional Registry. Designed to record progress in professional development, all workers were required to join the Registry, and to list their qualifications. Whenever a worker's qualifications were upgraded, the Registry recorded the new professional level. There is now a national organization of registries, the National Registry Alliance.

Professional development systems. Wheelock led the way in 1990, working with state cross-agency teams to identify the elements of state professional development (PD) systems. Seven foundations supported a national study and this work with state teams. NAEYC's

annual Professional Development Institute provided a venue for the state teams to meet and plan. In 2002 the federal government required states to report in their CCDF plans on whether their state had a PD system. NAEYC now hosts annual State PD System Summits for state teams. It published *Workforce Designs* in 2009 and now partners with Zero to Three in the new National Center on Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives, which is jointly funded by the federal Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start.

Idea 2: Influential Research Findings

Longitudinal studies had a huge impact on changes in policy, and on the quality of programs. A longitudinal study follows participants for years. It can show effects in participants' education and later lives, comparing children who participated in early childhood programs with children with similar characteristics who did not participate.

The longest-running study of a preschool program, The Perry Preschool Project, began in 1962 in Ypsilanti, Michigan, in an innovative public school. Follow-up studies compared the children who participated in the preschool with the control group, at ages 27,

40, and beyond. Children who participated succeeded in school and in life. Based on longitudinal studies, economists have concluded that investment in early childhood has a better return than any other public investment.

Brain/neuroscience studies and multi-science comparative data. By the 21st Century, new research tools made it possible to see the brain in action. Soon, many different scientists studying the human body began to compare their methods and findings, creating a new alliance for developing knowledge across scientific disciplines. When different sciences report similar findings, the effect is powerful mutual reinforcement that adds significantly to our understanding and can spur action. The Center for the Developing Child at Harvard University is one place where different sciences come together to compare perspectives and findings.

Brian Miller, BMX Racer
Interview by Kirsten Haugen

Hmmm — Ideas. . . the people I associate with end up being the root of most of my projects or activities.



Change can also help; I try not to get stuck in the same mindset or lifestyle for too long. My creativity was always encouraged as a child, which helped me believe that anything is possible. I feel that our childhoods bring us to where we are, but don't necessarily make us who we are.

New use of the term 'toxic stress' is useful for challenging a general public assumption that small traumas and non-responsive adults are temporary problems for children that do not lead to serious harm. We now know more about how the brain releases chemicals into the body. Science tells us that these chemicals can be as poisonous to children's minds as a chemical drug.

Idea 3: Public Investments

From the beginnings of child care programs in 1880 until 1962, public investments in programs for children were episodic, time-limited, or designed for a restricted population. Investment coincided with national emergencies (e.g., Great Depression nursery schools, Lanham Act Centers during wars). When World War II ended, centers

John Schert, Executive Director
Hinkley Center for Solid and Hazardous Waste Management,
University of Florida
Interview by Kirsten Haugen



My parents let me do a lot of cool stuff when I was a kid. I got to clean out the pipes in our septic tank drain field. I'd put my arm through the pipe and then scrape the goo out with my hands and then wash the pipe out. I got my start in recycling this way. I also got inoculated for lots of diseases this way.

closed and mothers were expected to become homemakers, leaving jobs to returning soldiers. A flourishing industry of ladies' magazines focused on home-making. During the 1950s, private Parent Cooperative Nursery Schools multiplied. By the 1960s, however, parents' need for income forced many mothers into the workforce. Before 1970, more than half of mothers of infants were already working. Today, more than half of two-parent working families at the median income would be poor unless both parents worked.

Local, state, and even federal investment in schools is longstanding. No permanent public funding in early care and education programs existed before 1962. Prior to that time, programs were the result of the operators' entrepreneurship, finding funds from charity, their own money, kindergarten classes, and sliding fees paid by parents.

The first federal funds to subsidize child care. The federal government began to subsidize child care with the 1962 Social Security Amendments. States could administer the federal funds, but only if

they had a child care licensing law. Existing programs and advocates welcomed the legislation, hoping to implement their own goals, to avoid segregating children by category, and to continue the use of sliding fee scales to make it possible for working-parent families to pay an affordable fee for the child care they required in order to work. The wording in the 1962 law mentioned sliding fees, and the later 1985 Social Security Amendments developed workable eligibility definitions that allowed families to increase earnings above poverty.

Head Start. In 1965, anti-poverty legislation created Head Start, a large national program designed for poor children. Head Start still focuses on poverty today.

The 1967 Social Security Amendments. By 1967, the number of federally-funded programs for child development and other services to children grew. More children in child care programs were subsidized. New programs were being authorized, and Head Start was creating programs. Congress, recognizing that

there was no system and no standards around which to organize all subsidized programs, wrote in this law that there be "a common set of program standards" for all federally-subsidized programs. This wording began 18 years of active controversy. Versions of federal standards were never implemented, despite federal efforts.

The 1985 Social Security Amendments. Federal standards were abolished in this law. It addressed continuity of care for children to remedy loss of child care when a subsidized family's income increased. Advocates saw the eligibility guidelines in 1985 as helpful. However, welfare reform soon restored more draconian income guidelines. Children receiving subsidy must be poor. They must stay poor. There was no more mention in law of sliding fee scales.

State-funded pre-kindergarten policy and funding advanced in three waves. The first, in the 1960s, related to Head Start; the second,



in the 1980s, responded to the education reform report “A Nation At Risk” that was released at the same time as the first Perry Preschool findings and its economic impacts. The third is related to brain research, which is re-inforced by a continuing focus on the return-on-investment rationale. The investment has grown from roughly \$25 million in the late 1970s to over \$5 billion in 2010-2011.

Idea 4: System Development and Alignment

The trilemma. The ‘trilemma’ represents the practical economics of a child care budget, at the micro-economic level, with issues faced by every director of an early childhood program who

sits down with a sharp pencil and eraser to make a budget. Every director knows that the budget requires a juggling of three factors (the trilemma): Child/staff ratios, salaries, and price (Morgan, 1982). Setting any two of them at an acceptable level will destroy the third one. All three factors must be addressed at the same time:

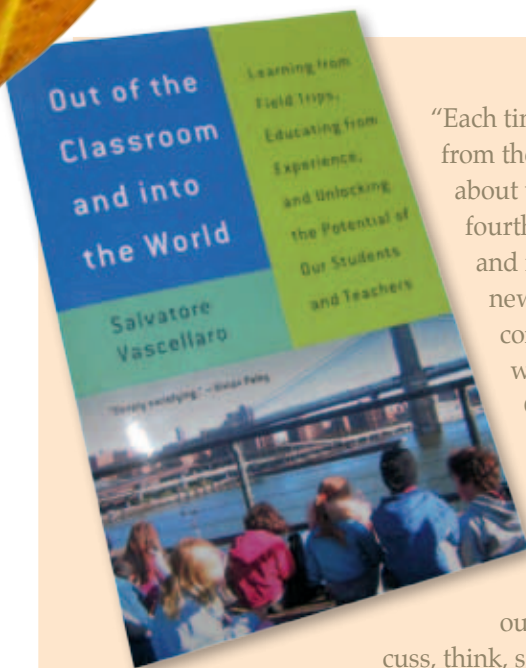
1) If the director sets a price that parents can afford, and pays the staff what they deserve, the ratios become too high for quality; 2) If she sets ratios that make quality possible and pays the staff what they deserve, the price takes the program out of the reach of most parents; 3) If she sets the ratios at a level where quality is possible and charges parents what they can afford, the staff are underpaid. That third trade-off is the one still being made. This is an example of a problem that can only be addressed at the systems level.

State system building. The combination of strong research evidence for quality and the positive return on investments

in quality combined with growing understanding that many of the toughest issues in our field cannot be solved at the program level, has led states to develop systems of early care and learning. These systems are based on standards for children’s learning, practitioner standards (related to the ‘big idea’ of professional development systems), and standards for programs. Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), developed as a way to support child care programs, have expanded now into a framework for building cross-sector systems in states. The federal departments of Education and HHS recognized the advances of states in the recent Early Learning Challenge grant competition.

In Sum

Together, these four big ideas are moving us forward. There remain challenges that our systems will have to solve. And in time, more big ideas will surface to make this happen.



“Each time children go out into the world with their class and are free to experience it from their own perspective, they are offered an opportunity to form their own opinions about what they see and hear and feel, not simply to accept the second- or third- or fourth-hand opinions of someone else. Encountering the complexity of that world and meeting the people who make it function, when carefully planned, can forge new connections that enlarge that child’s community. It is not solely the child’s concept of the world that is enlarged, but also the child’s participation in that world. Engaging the world out there — whether it be the people living in Grand Central Station, construction workers skillfully operating cranes that seem to go up to the sky, sanitation workers showing what happens to massive amounts of garbage — provokes questions, *real* questions; the *need* to find out; the *need* to share their impressions with others; and in some cases the *need to act*.

“If we value democratic living, then we must make the time and space in our classrooms to live democratically — time to question and find answers, discuss, think, solve problems with others, collaborate on common endeavors, go beyond narrow self-interest, be an active participant, and ultimately make time to engage with people and places in new ways.”

Salvatore Vascellaro, “*Out of the Classroom and into the World*” *Learning from Field Trips, Educating from Experience, and Unlocking the Potential of Our Students and Teachers* (New York: The New Press, 2011)