

# naeyc Affiliate Successes



Rachael Brown-Kendall, Christina Aubel, and Michael L. Koetje

## The Growth of an Affiliate The Birth of the Leadership Academy

**Rachael Brown-Kendall** is a professional development coach for Tacoma/Pierce Child Care Resource & Referral at the City of Tacoma in Washington. She had been involved with the Pierce County AEYC for a short time when the Leadership Academy was proposed, and has coordinated both the pilot cohort and the second cohort of the PCAEYC Leadership Academy. [rkendall@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:rkendall@cityoftacoma.org)

**Christina Aubel**, BA, is an early learning coach for Puget Sound Education Service District, working with directors and teachers of licensed child care programs in Pierce County, Washington. She has been working with children and families for 30 years.

**Michael L. Koetje** is district director of child development centers for Pierce College in Washington State. He has been a director in child care, Head Start, Tribal Head Start, and state-funded preschool for 32 years. [mkoetje@pierce.ctc.edu](mailto:mkoetje@pierce.ctc.edu)

**NAYEC Affiliate Successes**, published in the January, May, and September issues of *Young Children*, shares inspiring projects and strategies that other NAEYC Affiliates might learn from and replicate. If your Affiliate has a project or strategy to share, contact Meghan Dombrink-Green at [mgreen@naeyc.org](mailto:mgreen@naeyc.org). This column also appears in an online archive at [www.naeyc.org/jc/columns](http://www.naeyc.org/jc/columns).

Photos courtesy Tina Smith-Klahn.

**It was June 2009** and the Western States Leadership Network (WSLN) Conference was meeting in Monterey, California. The 13 state Affiliates belonging to this regional AEYC network were losing members and energy. Affiliate volunteers were weary from working full time and organizing events for members. They struggled to keep people energized and engaged.

Yet amidst the doom and gloom, rays of light emerged. At the WSLN conference, an Affiliate member from another state mentioned that her affiliate was recruiting new AEYC members from education classes at local colleges and universities. This idea resonated with Mary Skinner, a long-time Pierce County AEYC member and former board member. She began to think that PCAEYC could recruit new members by treating them as future leaders. To get those future leaders for our affiliate, community, and profession, Affiliate members would proceed as we do with children—we would grow them.

In September 2009 PCAEYC met for its summer retreat. Board members spent an afternoon discussing our mission and our vision, only to realize that we didn't really know what our mission was. We started the afternoon knowing we were about children, but as the temperature rose and the day wore on, we realized we weren't only about children—we were also about educators!

This is when Mary presented her ideas about growing new leaders. She described her idea of drawing in new, local members from the community by recognizing them as future leaders. PCAEYC would get future leaders for the Affiliate, the community, and the profession the same way teachers work with children. We would find them where they are and grow them.

Her idea was a hit, and before the afternoon was finished, we had formed a committee to establish the Leadership Academy and were

ready to push forward. By October, the committee had formed, set goals, settled on a name, and developed a budget. The presentation was made to the board, accepted, and funded. By November, applications were rolling in and by January 2010 PCAEYC's first cohort of 12 *leaders* (our name for the first cohort) had begun.

The Leadership Academy committee planned to meet one Saturday a month for eight months—a daunting schedule for both the leaders and the mentor-facilitators (the experienced PCAEYC members). The Affiliate would offer the academy some free activities, but we decided not to run it on the cheap. Because we really valued the cohort members, we needed to invest in their growth. We budgeted \$3,000 from our Affiliate professional development fund for presenters, materials, awards, and food. We also paid a member to serve as coordinator, to organize the details and keep us on task.

The new leaders studied leadership styles and communication styles, read articles, and facilitated group discussions around such topics as power and its uses, leading with compassion, and writing a tribute of themselves. The leaders were excited and enthusiastic about the challenges and skills they gained, which included ideas for advocacy and political action. Nearly every leader in the cohort reported a huge benefit. One shared, "I gained so much knowledge of myself—I never saw myself as a leader."

Eighteen months after the first cohort started, we deemed the Leadership Academy a huge success and a bit of a failure. Nothing went according to plan. We had expected students, young program directors, and newer teachers to join the cohort and then be prepared to take over the Affiliate leadership from the older members. In reality, some members of the first and second cohorts were older



than the “old” members who had hoped to slow down. And some old members who were planning to retire were rejuvenated, and they now plan to stay active.

Our first cohort of leaders has begun making an impact. At workshops and conferences they present on topics such as play with young children, literacy activities, natural environments, and behavior management. They have led book discussions with other staff in their program as part of team development meetings, and they have helped organize our Affiliate conference. Several have participated in the academy, presenting to this year’s cohort. Some leaders from the first cohort are now PCAEYC board members.

The Leadership Academy has unified our affiliate. It has brought us closer together as an organization and as a community of learners. We more readily accept new voices and conflicting opinions. The Affiliate grows stronger as we learn to compromise, collaborate, and reflect on our work. We mentor each other and our new leaders. We talk about “the whole teacher” or “the whole leader” in the same way we talk about nurturing the whole child.

Ray Soriano, a local leader of another Affiliate, said, “I see that the oak tree is the symbol of your conference and that you wrote that it ‘represents growth, protection, and potential.’ I think it also represents the growth, protection, and potential of teachers.” Margie Carter and Deb Curtis, early childhood education consultants inspired by the Leadership Academy and the Affiliate’s growth, will lead a three-day pre-conference event, “From Administrator to Innovator,” at our As a Teacher Grows conference in 2012. And PCAEYC will host the Western States Leadership Network conference in 2012.

We’ve come a long way since Mary Skinner discovered the bright side of a gloomy forecast at the 2009 WSLN conference. Now PCAEYC members have some great suggestions for a sunny future.

## Tips on Starting a Leadership Academy

1. Spread the word about your leadership academy by word of mouth, to start. You want a select group who are going to be a great example of your work.
2. Designate money to buy books and materials for this program. This makes it professional and impresses upon candidates—as well as affiliate members—the importance of the undertaking.
3. Enlist the help of campus child care directors, and child care resource and referrals organizations to spread the word about your program and give it credibility.
4. Provide the leadership academy cohort with specific goals, a curriculum, and a schedule. This is valuable for cohort members so that they know where they are going and how they will get there. It is equally important for the coaches, trainers, and affiliate members who lead the cohort.
5. Establish goals for the affiliate as to what they will gain from starting this leadership program. They will gain new members, enthused members, and the excitement of seeing the profession expand and quality improved.
6. Be flexible. We expected young people—as in students and young directors and teachers—but often had more mature people sign up for the academy. I think we were surprised by peoples’ hunger for reflecting deeply about themselves and their profession, as well as the hard work it takes to get there.

Copyright © 2011 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. See Permissions and Reprints online at [www.naeyc.org/yc/permissions](http://www.naeyc.org/yc/permissions).

## Gesell Institute of Human Development

### A child is more than a score.



### Gesell Developmental Observation-Revised *Newly Revised and Updated!* and new Gesell Early Screener

Provides an effective multidimensional assessment system and introduces an early screener

- Includes new normative data for children ages 3-6 years
- Assess social and emotional behaviors with NEW forms and components
- Meets IDEA and RTI requirements

Find out how the Gesell Developmental Observation-Revised and the Gesell Early Screener are perfect for your needs.



[www.gesellinstitute.org](http://www.gesellinstitute.org)  
1-800-369-7709