

The slide features a light beige background with a white rectangular area in the center. On the left side, there are three large, stylized sunflowers with bright yellow petals and dark brown, textured centers, accompanied by several green leaves. On the right side, there are two smaller sunflowers of the same style. The main title is written in a large, bold, black serif font, centered within the white area. Below the title, the names of the presenters are listed in a smaller, black serif font, with a horizontal line underlining the second name.

# ***The Early Childhood Competency-Based Virtual Reality PLA Project***

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# ***The IL ECE Workforce***

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Over 9,000 ECE workers have no credentials or college credit

ECE program quality rating system in Illinois requires ongoing professional development & credentialed staff

Statewide credentials (Gateways) and certificates are earned through college credit



# ***Known Barriers to College***

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## **Cost**

- ECE staff without credentials or college credit earn an average of \$13/hour
- Historically, available scholarships were limited in amount—until the Early Childhood Access for Equity Consortium formed through federal funding (expires December 2024)

## **Time**

- Typical workday starts at 6-7am & ends at 6-7pm
- Preponderance of staff are parents/caring for family members

## **Perception of Continuing Education & College**

- Work experiences, skills don't 'count'—nor are they preparatory for coursework at the associate's degree level
- 'Too far away from HS' to ever be college-ready again
- PLA loss in transfer is real—so investing time & talent in preparing a PLA portfolio, taking a PLA exam, might prove worthless in the end





# Credit for Prior Learning

## Cost + Time + Perception

- Find a way to recognize & translate ECE work experience to ECE college credit, to save time & money & ensure transferability
- Create a standardized instrument that could be used to award college credit while leading to the Gateways Level 2 Credential





# ECE Level 2 Competencies

**HGD1:** Identifies and describes theories of typical and atypical growth in all developmental domains and the interaction between individual and contextual factors on development and learning.

**HGD2:** Describes the interrelationship between developmental domains, holistic well-being, and adaptive/living skills.

**HGD3:** Defines how cultural, familial, biological, and environmental influences, including stress, trauma, protective factors, and resilience, impact children's well-being and learning.

**HSW1:** Articulates components of a safe and healthy environment.

**HSW2:** Maintains a safe and healthy environment.

**IRE1:** Describes the role of the environment in supporting children's development.

**IRE2:** Articulates the importance of relationships in supporting positive developmental and behavioral outcomes.

**FCR1:** Outlines the role and influence of families and communities on children's development, learning, and the early childhood setting.

**FCR2:** Identifies culturally and linguistically responsive communication and collaboration strategies designed to engage families in their children's care and education.

**FCR3:** Identifies and models respect for families by using strengths-based, culturally responsive practices.

**PPD1:** Demonstrates professionalism in image, behavior, and disposition.

**PPD2:** Describes historical and present-day representations of the fields of early childhood general education, early childhood special education, and early intervention and how individual experiences and values influence perspective and practice within these fields

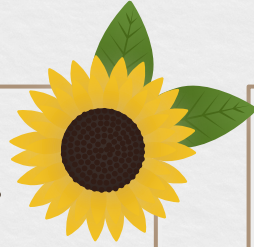


# Creating a VR PLA

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## Gather Faculty...

...to create workplace scenarios eliciting the competencies [29]



## Turn Scenarios...

...into VR simulations:  
Mursion & the Competency-based Education Network

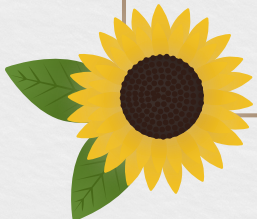
## Field Test...

...with employers, to ensure 'reality' & authenticity [10]



## Field Test Again...

...with ECE students [8]



## Initial Training...

...with statewide ECE faculty [53]

## Pilot...

...to further work out the kinks [4 IHEs]





# Experience a Simulation Bit







# ***If you build it, can they use it?***

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What we've learned about the state  
of our state's PLA





# ***Known PLA Barriers***

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## **Institutional**

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- No standardized practices among IHEs (e.g., challenge exam, portfolio, interviews)
- Programs vary in where they teach the 12 competencies
- Not all same-level competencies are taught in any one course, making it impossible to award partial credit

## **State Level**

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- ICCB Rules: No PLA until 15 credits earned
- In transfer: Receiving IHEs decide whether to honor the PLA awarded at the sending institution—resulting in unexpected credit loss at times

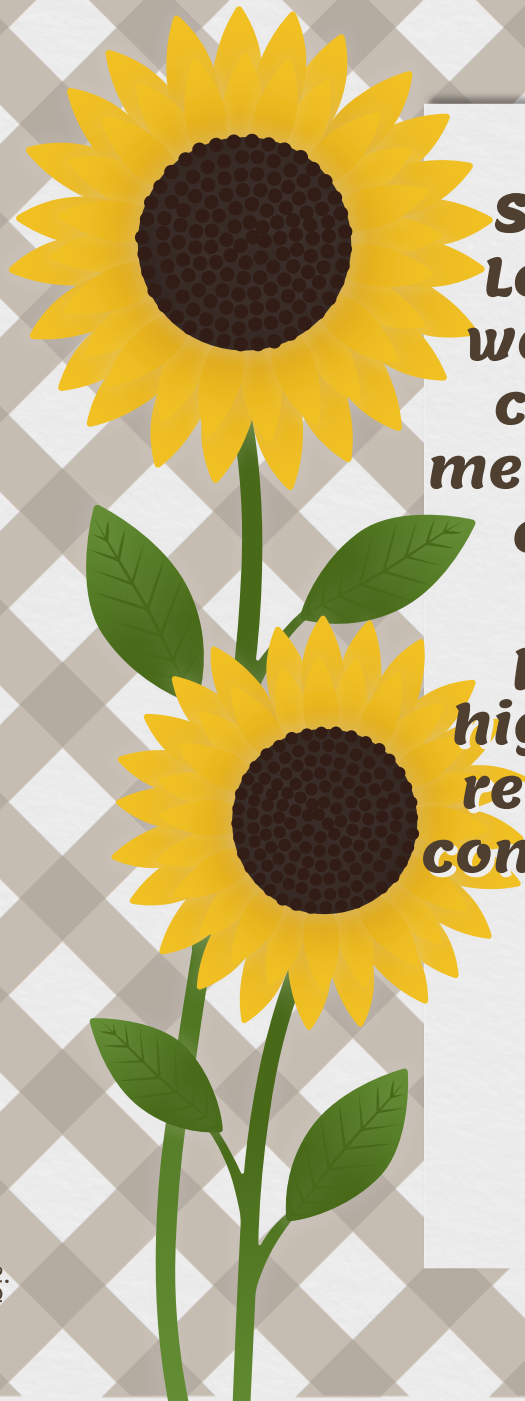


# Fixing the System

- Currently building consensus on using this instrument by piloting with five IHEs from geographically diverse areas
- Providing faculty development opportunities for learning how to modularize courses to include only same-level competencies
- Working with state agency reps to determine Rules and Codes to amend or delete & replace







**SC-BC is college credit that has been evaluated via a Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) process that recommends both workforce/industry-regulated credentials and college-level credit, by using aligned, competency-based standardized methods. This type of college-level Prior Learning Assessment credit is awarded for courses in which competencies are documented. The award of SC-BC should shorten the prospective learners' time required to advance toward a higher credential or degree. This type of PLA credit is used to recognize the learning gained by incumbent workers whose competence has been verified using standardized assessment processes.**

— A new type of credit for IL:  
Standardized Competency-based Credit  
Brennan & Donovan 2022





***We're  
hopeful!***

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Developing & using standardized PLA instruments for fields/areas that are competency-based will increase adult learners' enrollment & completion of certificates, degrees, & other continuing education





**Thank you!**

Questions? Comments?

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