



Early Childhood Connections

Introduction to Project Approach - Building a Foundation

Professional Development Opportunity

Kohl Children's Museum is seeking home and center-based childcare educators to learn about and implement the **Project Approach** in their programs utilizing Kohl Children's Museum as a resource and learning laboratory. This program—hosted by the museum for over 20 years—includes professional development for teachers and interactive learning experiences for children and their families.

Programming is Gateways-approved and connects to content areas by addressing Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards, environments, curriculum design, observation & documentation, professional development, and family involvement. Participants will receive 18 hours of Gateways/Illinois CPDUs for complete participation in the program.

Focus

To expand the use of the Project Approach into center, home, and school programs through professional development and field trip opportunities.

Audience

Early childhood educators in home- and center-based childcare settings where 50% or more of children receive meal assistance and/or Child Care Assistance in Cook and Lake Counties.

Application Procedures

Applications must be completed online using the following link:

<https://forms.gle/kkVdGawz9siY1Zt37>

Training Dates

Attending all training sessions (8:30 AM – 3:30 PM) is required. Please note the trainings will be completed in English, but handouts and resources can be provided in Spanish. Training sessions will happen in person at the Kohl Children's Museum on the following dates:

Saturday, October 3, 2026 / Saturday, December 5, 2026 / Saturday, March 6, 2027

Please send any questions to the Education Department at the Kohl Children's Museum by emailing educationteam@kcmgc.org or calling (847) 832-6873.

Program Requirements

1. **Participate in three professional development workshops.** Participating educators must attend all three workshops from 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM. Participants will receive 18 hours of Gateways/Illinois CPDUs and a stipend upon full completion of the program.
Hours for Gateways/Illinois CPDUs are only able to be offered for the time spent at in-person trainings. We estimate project work and assignments (detailed below in points 2 and 3) take an average of **5-10 additional hours a month** throughout the program. This includes time spent in the classroom on student investigation and pre-project work. More information will be provided upon the start of the program. Please contact us with any questions.
2. **Participate in evaluation, assessment, and assignments.** Prior to beginning the program, Museum Project Staff will observe a participant’s learning setting (home, classroom, etc.). An additional observation will be scheduled after program completion. In addition, participants will be required to complete project descriptions and journals, training evaluations, and attitude surveys.
3. **Plan, design, conduct and document** a child-centered project from October 2026 through March 2027. Additional support for conducting a project in the classroom will be offered by the museum’s education staff.
4. **Select and purchase project materials.** Participants will select and receive materials to support their projects. Materials will be purchased through the Kohl Children’s Museum.
5. **Schedule and attend one field trip experience** at the Museum or at your site* for students who are enrolled in your classroom. Transportation costs are covered by KCM, but buses must be booked and scheduled by the participating teacher(s). **Due to transportation laws, toddler classrooms will have a field trip at your site.*
6. **Coordinate and conduct one family art activity** to share and introduce information about the Project Approach with families. Activity kits will be provided by the museum.
7. **Schedule and participate in one project celebration at Kohl Children’s Museum*.** Educators are required to schedule their form of transportation (1 bus per participating classroom paid for by the Museum) and bring their project documentation to display at the Museum. Each student’s family will receive a free three-year membership to the Museum. Project Celebrations will be held on **Sunday, April 18, 2027; Saturday, May 8, 2027; and Sunday, May 16, 2027.** Teachers will be able to select one of these dates. **Due to transportation laws, toddler classrooms can opt for a celebration at your site.*

Program Includes:

Field trip fees and bus	Stipend (upon completion of program)
Project celebration fees and bus	Family Art Activity Kits
Museum membership for each student’s family (upon completion of the program)	Project Materials selected by participant and purchased by KCM with a set budget