

# T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® National Center

## Blog from the Executive Director

### A Web of Support

June 25, 2015

Some people use the phrase that it takes a village to raise a child. What that means to me is that the job of parenting is very hard. There are many challenges for all parents to find the consistent quality time, endless energy, sufficient resources and parenting skills and knowledge needed to be good at their job. The “village” are those family members, friends, community organizations, early childhood programs and teachers who help the family be successful.

Recently at our annual T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGE\$ Symposium I was facilitating a panel of former and current T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients. They are all very successful in their careers, each one having advanced in the field as they increased their education. The panel was a group of both smart and wise women who had to work hard to go to school on top of their teaching and family responsibilities. I asked them what they believed they had needed to accomplish what they had done. They described how hard the journey was to balance school, family and work and to stay the course through the process of earning both two and four year degrees. One panelist described what she called her “web of support”. And it made me think of the village. For her, and really for all T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipients who embark on the long journey toward degree completion, that web of support includes family, friends, faculty members, co-workers and employers. But it also includes the economic supports that T.E.A.C.H. brings that give her a chance for a debt-free college education, paid release time and consistent, small increases in compensation. And finally, the T.E.A.C.H. counselor, in her role as coach and cheerleader, cannot be underestimated. Each panelist described the value of having someone in their court, providing the emotional support and the ability to help them trouble-shoot the occasional crisis, encouraging them on a pathway of steady progress.

All of the panelists agreed that the web of support was needed. But one panelist said that in the web there had to be the “I can do this” belief that was supported and reinforced throughout her journey. Many of our T.E.A.C.H. recipients struggle with math classes that are a part of their degree requirement; or they experience personal health or family crises. This panelist talked about how with the right attitude and support, you can “fail forward.” When she had a set back, she needed the inner strength to pick herself back up, see what needed to be done, garner the lessons from the set-back and get back on the pathway. That inner strength comes from a web of support that validated her ability to achieve her goals...even when things went wrong.

With the new Institute of Medicine report on Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8 and its recommendation that all lead teachers have appropriate early childhood bachelor’s degrees, we must seriously think about how we can build the needed web of support for our nation’s early childhood teachers. They deserve nothing less. And our children will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

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