



## Leap Makes the Grade at Annual CAEYC Conference!



Isabel Govea presents to a room full of education professionals during the Language Through Science presentation.

Teachers clamored for more during Leap's presentations at the Chicago Metro Association for the Education of Young Children "Opening Minds" Conference in January. This

conference is the largest early childhood education conference in the region. Leap was there in full force.

The three presentations: **Language Through Science, Talk. Listen. Connect.**, and **Phonemic**

**awareness** reached nearly 100 early childhood education professionals. All three focused on key early childhood language and literacy development concepts.

"I loved the activities and I can't wait to use them in my classroom," one audience member said. On average, the three presenta-

tions scored nearly a 5 on a 6-point scale of obtaining new knowledge. The audience members walked away with valuable information that most of them said they planned to implement in their classroom or agency.

Leap's approach to teacher professional development and parent involvement is structured to enhance students' oral communication skills and vocabulary. Programs like **Language Through Science** and **Talk. Listen. Connect.** help teachers build student vocabulary, increase classroom dia-

logue, encourage hands-on science activities, and foster more parent involvement.

Teachers, principals, Head Start leaders, speech-language and reading professionals and others have found Leap programs to be of the highest quality. **Contact us now** to find out how to bring Leap to your school or agency this

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## We Thrive on Talent: Introducing the Newest Leap Staff Members

Leap is excited to welcome **Nina Smith** and **Dalila Avila** as the newest members of the Leap team. Smith has a B.S. in Communication Sciences and Disorders, a M.A. in Speech-Language Pathology and a M.A. in Learning Disabilities, all from Northwestern University. Avila holds a B.S. in Communication Sciences and Disorders from Northwest-



Nina Smith, left, and Dalila Avila.

ern University, a M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology from Teachers College at Columbia University and an Elementary

and Secondary education teaching certificate.

"The talent and passion of our staff is one of the things that has allowed Leap to thrive in these difficult times. Both Nina and Dalila believe in the mission and goals of the organization and I am lucky to have them on our team," said executive director Michael Levesque.

Leap has built a reputation for delivering high quality programs to some of Chicago's most academically challenged students.

Help us reach more students and dedicated teachers. Donate Today by making a gift of: \$50, \$100, \$250, or \$500.



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## Next Generation of Board Leadership Assumes New Roles

Reggie Moore and Josh Aldort are Leap's new chairman and vice-chairman, respectively. Moore has been on Leap's Board of Directors since 2007 and Aldort since 2002. Moore is the head of Hunt's Portfolio Brand Management for Con-Agra Foods, while Aldort is a practicing attorney at Clausen Miller, P.C.

"We have had such loyalty and fantastic leadership from Russ and

Chris for so many years," said Leap's founder Catherine Gottfred, Ph.D. "However, it is exciting to see the vigor and excitement brought by Reggie and Josh. Reggie's focus to help us examine our strategic plan as an organization and to make the board members' engagement in the activities of Leap a priority is wonderful."

At Leap's February 2010 board meeting,

Moore introduced a strategy model and committee system that is designed to increase collaboration, accountability, responsiveness and focus.

"The committee structure will allow the board to become more connected with the needs of the Leap staff and will allow the staff to have a better perspective of the direction the board would like to take Leap," Moore said.

"The most impressive thing about Leap is that it works to correct a critical gap in America's education system; namely, by working with preschoolers to increase their vocabulary and ability to speak in order to lay a solid education foundation," Aldort said.

Leap is also excited to welcome David Starr, of US Bank, from the junior board of directors to the full board of directors.

## News and Notes

Leap founder, **Catherine Gottfred, Ph.D.**, will be the convocation speaker at **Northwestern University's** ceremony for graduating M.A. students in the Communication Sciences and Disorders Department. The ceremony is on June 18.

"I am happy to do this since I know from talking to hundreds, if not thousands, of CSD students as presi-

dent of ASHA how inspiring it is to feel their energy, dedication and commitment; not to mention how well-read and intelligent they are," Gottfred said.

**Liz Condon** and her husband Sean welcomed their first baby, Samuel Sean Condon, on February 10, 2010. Congratulations to the Condon family!

**April 23** - Michael Levesque will be leading a workshop at **Chicago State University** during the Black Male Initiative conference.

Beginning in May, Leap will get an early jump on its summer **Language for Scholars** programs. Partners will include: **CSU Upward Bound; DMSF; Collegiate Scholars; LINK**

### VOLUNTEER!

**Leap could not reach as many students, teachers or families without the help of our volunteers. If you are a student looking to get some valuable work experience contact us today to see how you can lend a hand.**