

## China Initiative

---

*“This is an opportunity for a cross-cultural exchange and a chance to understand child development in different cultures.”*

— Jie-Qi Chen, Ph.D., executive director of the China Initiative

---

In 2015, Erikson Institute formed a groundbreaking partnership with the Red Yellow Blue Education Technology Development Company (RYB), the largest private provider of early childhood education and care in China. Throughout the five-year partnership, Erikson staff will share knowledge of early childhood theory and teacher training in the United States, offering an opportunity for professionals from both organizations to learn from each other. The initiative includes three types of programs led by Erikson faculty and staff: online, in-person in Chicago, and in-person in China. Each program features a track with a birth to age 3 focus and another centered on preschool through age 6. Participants have the opportunity to earn graduate certificates in infant studies or preschool teacher development.

### Responding to a Need

In recent years, China’s government has made early childhood education a priority, investing in public preschool education and professional development for educators. However, as China’s younger residents move farther away from older relatives who traditionally provide child care, the need for quality programs exceeds the amount of public resources available. Today, private child care organizations serve more than half of China’s children from birth to age 6, making Erikson’s partnership with RYB an innovative way to provide expert early childhood training where it can have a major impact. The initiative provides robust training not widely available in China, offering an in-depth understanding of child development and hands-on experience in the field.

### Quick Facts

- RYB is *the largest private provider* of early childhood education and care in China.
- A *five-year partnership* between Erikson and RYB will allow Chinese professionals to learn about *early childhood theory and best practices* in the U.S.
- Online and in-person programs are projected to reach more than **2,000 RYB educators** serving *more than 200,000 families per week*.

### Erikson’s Unique Approach

As Erikson’s senior vice president for Academic Affairs and dean of faculty, Dr. Chen is renowned among early childhood professionals in America and also has a strong reputation in China, bringing expert knowledge about child development and education to the country’s burgeoning field. Her reputation in China helped lead to the partnership with RYB, while Erikson’s leadership in the field and innovative professional development programs form the basis of the China Initiative. RYB educators benefit from the rich understanding of early childhood theory and educational best practices that Erikson brings to the partnership. Training sessions allow for RYB teachers to learn about U. S. practices, while also serving as cross-cultural exchanges with each party gaining a deeper understanding of how educators in both countries approach common challenges.

Continued on back

## What is the Impact?

The China Initiative brings the Erikson perspective on early childhood to families in the world's most populous country. RYB has early childhood care and education centers in more than 300 cities, serving more than 200,000 families per week. Throughout the partnership, more than 2,000 RYB professionals will have access to training with Erikson. Feedback from RYB educators who have taken part in Erikson-led teacher training programs has been positive.

- Center administrators and directors participating in Chicago-based Leadership Enhancement Programs indicated that hands-on learning and demonstrations have been beneficial. While in Chicago, they observed a variety of early childhood settings, helping open their minds to new philosophies and reflect on their own practice.
- Front-line educators say they benefit from “parallel interactive learning,” the idea that the learning is two-way and multiple answers can be correct.
- Online course participants felt engaged and encouraged to actively participate in the training.
- Leadership seminars that encouraged participants to reflect on their own practices and experiences were well-received.

## Looking Ahead

As the China Initiative continues, Erikson will expand its offerings to RYB educators while piloting new programs and services.

- Four Erikson faculty members — Pamela Epley, Ph.D.; Mary Hynes-Berry, Ph.D.; Mary Quest, M.A.; and Jennifer Rosinia, Ph.D. — will travel to China in June of 2016 to continue in-person training sessions for teachers in RYB's birth to age 3 and preschool tracks.
- Margaret McGann, parent coordinator at the Barbara Vick Early Childhood and Family Center in Chicago, also will travel to China as part of the Erikson team to teach RYB educators about yoga for preschoolers, which helps students calm down, concentrate, and communicate better.
- Online professional development programs for RYB preschool educators will launch in September of 2016, following the launch of programs for birth to age 3 educators in 2015.
- A parent-child playgroup will launch in the summer of 2016 for RYB staff and their children. The playgroup will serve as a pilot program that could potentially be offered to RYB clients in the future.