

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

January 29, 2015

Dear Selection Committee Members:

It is a pleasure to nominate Dr. Claire Vallotton for the *Exchange* Emerging Leaders in Early Care and Education award. Claire's leadership and work at state, national and international levels is exemplary, and the work she is carrying out is having positive impacts on the quality of early care and education for infants and toddlers.

Claire's pioneering work on early communication in infants and toddlers reflects high impact scholarship. For example, Claire's research has demonstrated that infants' use of gestures and signs elicits greater responsiveness from caregivers in early care settings and from parents in home settings. Related to this research, Claire developed a 6-lesson curriculum on infant signs and gestures designed to enhance the quality of parent/caregiver- infant relationship via promoting sensitive and responsive interactions. The curriculum is now in use by Michigan State University Extension specialists and educators working with parents and caregivers across the state of Michigan. Moreover, in collaboration with colleagues from Chile, Claire is studying cultural variation in caregiver and child expression and representation of emotion via gestures and words throughout toddlerhood. In addition, with collaborators in 7 countries, Claire is investigating how parents' and children's use of signs, gestures and other symbols vary across cultures, and how these variations are related to cultural values and priorities for child-rearing. Claire and her colleagues have collected data from 8 countries (U.S., Chile, U.K., France, Germany, Czech Republic, China, Japan) to examine cultural variation in parents' goals, teaching methods, and the content of the signs and gestures families use. This body of work will have far reaching implications for culturally competent approaches to caregiver training and parenting education.

One of the most exciting initiatives Claire is leading is her work as the founder of the Collaborative for Understanding the Pedagogy of Infant/Toddler Development (CUPID). CUPID is comprised of faculty involved in the training and preparation of early childhood professionals from 20 universities across the country with the common goal of thoughtfully enhancing the preparation of the nation's early childhood workforce. As part of this work, CUPID has developed a set of competencies that professionals need to work effectively with infants, toddlers, and families, including knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Given the great need for high quality early education and childcare professionals, Claire's efforts with CUPID have garnered national attention. The work has been presented at the Network of Infant Toddler Researchers meeting at the Administration for Children and Families, the World Association for Infant Mental Health, and the Head Start Research Conference. Claire has been asked to serve on an expert panel at the Administration for Children and Families on credentialing the infant/toddler workforce.

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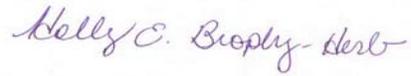
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Leaders are visionaries whose passion and curiosity promote growth and change. Claire certainly embodies these characteristics. Her high-impact research and leadership are making significant contributions to the field. She is most deserving of the *Exchange* Emerging Leaders in Early Care and Education award.

Sincerely,



Holly E. Brophy-Herb, Ph.D.
Professor