



ECRC Community Chronicle

EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER :: *Spring News 2017*

THE SMARTEST INVESTMENT OF ALL

WHY WE MUST TEACH THE TEACHERS WELL

Experts agree that our children need high-quality early childhood programs. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), “Several decades of research clearly demonstrate that high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood programs produce short- and long-term positive effects on children’s cognitive and social development.”¹

The catch is that only the *high-quality* programs make that positive difference in children’s lives.

What makes a program high quality? One crucial component is professional development for early childhood professionals. In fact, professional development may be the most critical element. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development states that “there is a general consensus, supported by research, that well-educated, well-trained professionals are the key factor in providing high-quality early childhood education and care with the most favorable cognitive and social outcomes for children.”²

“Professional development actually pays off in real dollars down the line. Researchers have shown that high-quality early education benefits the community at a rate of about 13% per annum, in terms of reduced health care costs, reduced crime, higher levels of education, and greater lifetime earnings.”

— National Public Radio

NAEYC agrees, stating that “teachers who have specific preparation and ongoing professional support in child development and learning are more likely to have effective, positive interactions with children and their families, offer richer language and other content experiences, use a variety of appropriate curricula and teaching practices (including play) for individualized and group teaching, and create more high-quality learning environments.”³

Continued on page 4

A Message from the Executive Director



Today, the ECRC serves families, educators, schools, and the community. But when we opened our doors in 2000, our sole area of focus was helping educators improve.

While we have since branched out, educator professional development remains a significant part of our work, and rightly so. After all, educators are only as effective as the tools and knowledge they have at their disposal. The ECRC's training, technical assistance, coaching, and mentoring ensure educators are as well equipped as they can possibly be.

We aim to be the knowledge and resource authority for all early educators in our community. As the body of early childhood knowledge continues to grow, we continue helping educators learn to apply that knowledge in the field, so that Ohio's children can learn, succeed, and thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Scott Hasselman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

SCOTT HASSELMAN, *Executive Director*

Paths to Excellence

REGIONAL SUPPORT FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

By 2020, all child care programs receiving public funding will have to be a part of the Step Up To Quality system. That means they'll need to meet standards and engage in processes that can be challenging to navigate.

To help providers meet the requirements, the state recently awarded the ECRC a \$200,000 grant to offer technical assistance and training to publicly funded programs in Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, and Trumbull counties. Currently, 35 high-need programs are participating. The programs are receiving varying amounts of public funding, but most are receiving 50% or above.

The ECRC is visiting, observing, and advising these centers on selecting/ implementing curriculum; screening and assessment needs; lesson planning; classroom planning; staff support, management, and professional development; family and community partnerships; and navigating Step Up To Quality processes.

The participating programs have committed to:

- Working toward defined goals and meeting monthly with an ECRC early childhood specialist to discuss progress.
- Participating in monthly meetings with colleagues.
- Sending staff to the necessary ongoing training.
- Completing all paperwork and making changes necessary to meet the standards of the desired star rating.

Many programs find that staff education requirements are a major obstacle to entering Step Up To Quality. To combat this, educators working in participating programs are taking Child Development Associate (CDA) classes under the ECRC's innovative and efficient CDA cohort model. There



are 90 total CDA students enrolled. Three centralized training locations—one each in Stark, Summit, and Trumbull counties—ensure that no participant is more than a 45-minute drive from classes.

The ECRC will continue providing ongoing consultation to guide the administrators and educators as they work toward their goals. They will also have access to tangible supports, individualized to meet each program's needs. For instance, some programs need classroom materials,

while others need screening and assessment tools to support their quality improvement efforts.

While the work is just gearing up, preliminary feedback is positive. All participants were pleased to have someone who could walk them through the process, assess their individual situation, and suggest strategies to overcome barriers to improvement. They welcomed the opportunity for staff to take CDA classes at no cost; this was seen as a hopeful step toward achieving higher star ratings. ♦

HAPPY CAMPERS LEARNING CENTER

A RISING STAR IN YOUNGSTOWN



The motto of Happy Campers Learning Center is *Working With Families – Building Better Communities*. Now, with support from the ECRC and donations from the community, they're well on their way to doing just that.

Happy Campers is in a high-need Youngstown neighborhood, serving only publicly funded children. This means that by 2020, they'll be required to enter the Step Up To Quality system. With an owner and staff who have great relationships with the families and children, the center was enthusiastic to accept ECRC guidance and support.

Happy Campers is participating in the ECRC's **Paths to Excellence** project. Tina Lemon is the early childhood specialist providing regular on-site coaching and helping Happy Campers integrate best practices into their education and care.

One identified need was necessary furnishings and supplies. Tina swung into action, posting a Facebook request for donations. In no time flat, she had lots of new and gently used furnishings, toys, and books. The ECRC donated new supplies as well.

Without the donations, Tina feels there's no way Happy Campers could have been ready to apply for a star rating: the cost would have been prohibitive. Now, with the donations, in addition to the guidance, coaching, and staff training they're receiving from the ECRC, Happy Campers is looking forward to applying for their first star in late summer or fall. ♦



The ECRC and the community are helping these Happy Campers learn and thrive.

I am so grateful for the items that were donated to our center. My staff and I are excited and appreciative as well... I cannot express the joy and wonder on the kids' faces, and the teachers' also. They kept saying it feels like Christmas in February! We thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

—Tracy Jordan, owner and director, Happy Campers Learning Center

Continued from page 1

Low Pay, Low Status: High Quality?

Caring for young children is complicated and exhausting, and it's a very important job. But the pay is pretty much as low as it gets. In 2015, the annual median wage for an Ohio child care worker was \$19,860, or just over \$9.50 an hour.⁴ That's about the same hourly pay as a supermarket cashier. Often, the job doesn't even come with benefits. Early childhood is also a relatively low-status field. Predictably, turnover is very high.

High-quality professional development can make the difference. It helps early childhood professionals understand that theirs is not just any old job; it's a career that benefits society. The more training, mentoring, and coaching a worker gets, the better equipped she is to do an excellent job and the more invested she becomes in her career. It's a self-reinforcing cycle of quality, and a win-win-win situation: the children win, the professionals win, and the center or school wins, too.

Beyond that, professional development actually pays off in real dollars down the line. Researchers have shown that high-quality early education benefits the community at a rate of about 13% per annum, in terms of reduced health care costs, reduced crime, higher levels of education, and greater lifetime earnings.⁵ That's nearly double the average return a community would see from investing in stocks. A payoff that high is rare, making early childhood professional development the smartest investment of all. ♦

NOTES: ¹<https://www.naeyc.org/policy/excellence>; ²<http://www.oecd.org/education/school/49322232.pdf>; ³https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/201NAEYC_Childhood%20Educators.pdf; ⁴<https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-troubling-pay-gap-early-childhood-teachers>; ⁵<http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/12/12/504867570/how-investing-in-preschool-beats-the-stock-market-hands-down>



Innovation in Professional Development

THE ECRC'S CDA COHORT MODEL

There's a reason why we learn our numbers before we learn to add, and why we learn to read letters before we start reading words. In order for learning to "stick," we need a foundation of basic knowledge that gives context and purpose to later lessons. In other words, we learn best when new material relates to something we've already learned. It's a simple concept that yields powerful results for all learners. Professional development is also more effective when presented this way.

With the ECRC's innovative CDA cohort model, participants commit to taking a series, or module, of classes designed around a particular focus. The classes are presented in a logical order, so that the initial knowledge gained forms the necessary foundation for future learning.

The CDA curriculum is divided into four such modules, each providing 20 hours in the classroom, 6 hours of reading, and assignments across the required subject

areas. This format allows for in-depth discussion of subject material, time for reflection, and cooperative work in small groups. Each module must be taken in its entirety; taking individual classes is not permitted.

Coaching and mentoring are key components of the model, because they scaffold growth. In addition, the peer support that comes from learning as part of a group increases the likelihood that students will complete the coursework and ultimately apply to receive the CDA credential. ♦

WHAT IS THE CDA?

The Child Development Associate (CDA) is a nationally recognized early childhood credential. For many early educators, the CDA is the foundation of a lifelong career.

According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), "obtaining a CDA is an important accomplishment and one that develops well informed practitioners, knowledgeable in child development and best practices for teaching young children."

In Ohio, a child care center can only enter the state's Step Up To Quality rating system if at least 50% of staff members have a CDA.

Since 2000, the ECRC has provided CDA classes, mentoring, coaching, and support to hundreds of students. For more information about CDA classes, visit ecresourcecenter.org

We learn best when new material relates to something we've already learned.



A BIG THANK YOU TO 2016 DONORS

We have listed the names of our generous donors. Please consider making a gift to the ECRC's current annual fund.

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A Tribute to Scott Hasselman

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Step Up to Quality

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

EDUCATION
IN ACTION

In order to work toward its vision of ensuring that all of Ohio's children are valued, healthy, and happy, the state has set quality goals for early childhood providers. Those goals are:

Children have high-quality early care and education supports and environments. **1**

Children have supports and services to promote their comprehensive healthy development. **2**

Families have meaningful community and parenting supports. **3**

The Step Up To Quality star rating system was created to identify and categorize programs that go beyond minimum licensing standards. This well-defined, progressive pathway to improving quality takes into consideration the fact that programs start from different levels of quality and capability, and grants additional stars as programs incrementally improve.

Star-rated programs demonstrate higher levels of quality in a variety of ways. Star-rated programs have highly trained teachers, support development of school readiness skills, have committed to continuous improvement, and demonstrate a focus on family engagement.

The educators in star-rated programs are required to keep updated on the latest knowledge, research, and techniques supporting children's development and learning. Each educator must complete at least 20 hours of specialized training every two years, must plan learning activities that are based on the Ohio Early Learning and Development Standards and that meet each child's individual needs, and must build relationships with families and the community that support children's progress and well-being.



Drive-in movie night at First Baptist Nursery School and Child Care.



STEP UP TO QUALITY IN ACTION

What does higher quality look like? Every program is different. Here are two examples:

First Baptist Nursery School and Child Care Center in Alliance offers regularly scheduled parent engagement events. In February, they held Drive-In Movie Night in their gym. Staff members decorated the gym floor with a pretend roadway and set up a movie screen. Parents decorated large boxes as “cars” for the children to sit in while they watched the show. The cars were decorated very creatively, and everyone had a lot of fun!

Brightside Academy in Akron is a very large center. The staff have put a lot of energy and time into preparing to increase from two to four stars in the Step Up To Quality system. Four staff members are enrolled in the ECRC’s CDA classes; they will complete their training in June. The director and assistant director have been very busy implementing new policies and procedures consistent with high-quality programming and refining staff training to ensure a consistent staff approach to providing developmentally appropriate care and education.

For more information about professional development for educators, visit ecresourcecenter.org





KeKe Harris with her class.

EDUCATION IN ACTION

“I want to learn as much as possible to help them grow and become a positive impact in their life.”

— Ke’Aunte Harris

Ke’Aunte Harris

MAKING HER DREAM A REALITY

Ke’Aunte (KeKe) always wanted to be a teacher, but she figured that meant lots of sitting at a desk and reading books. When she began working toward her Child Development Associate certification at the ECRC, she was pleasantly surprised to find that much of her coursework was hands on; she and her classmates pretended that they were the children and participated in active learning. She liked learning by “messing around.” She learned better that way. This helped her understand that children learn better that way, too.

“Children understand more things through play. The kids may think they are always playing, but they are actually learning new things each day. As a preschool teacher, it’s important to pay attention to each child’s wants and needs. Some children may not get the same attention they get at school. I learned to be sensitive to every child’s emotions they express.”

KeKe says that in her CDA classes, “I learned that it’s all about positive reinforcement. Instead of telling a child what

he or she is doing wrong, you show them the correct way by saying positive things, to help them understand why it’s not ok to make bad choices. For example, when a child is hitting a friend, I would say, ‘please keep our hands to ourselves. What can we use our hands for?’ The kids would give examples such as clapping, giving our friends high-fives, and eating. Then I would ask, ‘How would you feel if someone hit you? How do you think your friend feels?’ These are positive ways to help children understand.”

KeKe learned that children need to develop social and emotional skills just as much as they need to learn their ABCs and 123s. “I also learned that the lesson plans should be based on the children’s interest. I let the kids move freely around the room to explore new things. The children learn from each other. I have noticed some of the older preschoolers will teach the younger children how to put on their coats or put the caps on markers. We have a lot of teamwork in our classroom.”

Her goals? “I want to learn as much as possible to help them grow and become a positive impact in their life.”

KeKe is also currently earning her associate’s degree online. She hopes one day to work in a public school setting or even have her own in-home childcare. ♦

A Celebration of Fatherhood—and Football



Former NFL player Shawn Crable.

On February 18, the Pro Football Hall of Fame hosted a celebration of fatherhood, in partnership with Buckeye Health Plan, Centene Health, and the Fatherhood Coalition. Approximately 200 children attended the luncheon event, escorted by their fathers.

The group engaged in several fun activities and received Fatherhood Coalition shirts that said *I matter!*

The guest speaker was the ECRC's parent engagement coordinator, Shawn Crable, who was formerly a linebacker for the New England Patriots and is now a father of five.

Crable was pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the importance of fatherhood with local dads, something he's been doing throughout our community as he works with groups of fathers who want to become more engaged in their children's lives. ♦

REACHING
OUT



Remember that special person who cared for your child?

You can honor that wonderful person with a donation in their name. Your donation will help others to change children's lives forever. Consider a gift to the ECRC today.

Visit ecresourcecenter.org to learn about programs, services, and volunteer opportunities, and to donate securely online.



EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCE CENTER

A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System

1718 CLEVELAND AVENUE NORTHWEST
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OUR MISSION

The mission of the Early Childhood Resource Center is to promote the healthy development of young children by strengthening families, improving the quality of early learning experiences, increasing school and community readiness, and informing public policy.

CENTER HOURS

Monday 12:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Tuesday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Wednesday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Thursday 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Friday 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

The Center is closed on weekends.

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