

THE VOICE

Issue Number 1

The Crisis in Early Childhood Education

By: Joanne Gill

Date: 2/9/15

Early childhood education

Early childhood education is one of the most miss-understood professions in that, on one hand, it seems to be viewed as a “baby sitting” service and on the other extreme, the idea of quality seems to be merged with academics (the impingement of kindergarten curriculum into preschool). These two extremes have resulted in creating a crisis in the early childhood arena. The early childhood community is now comprised of business leaders and individuals who have no ideological concept of child development. Therefore, establishing the fundamental premise of quality standards in early childhood education seems to be debatable.



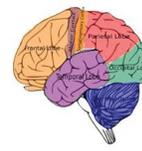
Reflecting on quality standards....

Children are always striving to make sense of the world around them. Their early experiences have a lasting effect on how they perceive and interpret the world. Because of this, it is vital that early childhood educators are knowledgeable about how children develop and learn. The early childhood arena seems to misinterpret retaining individuals with a bachelor’s degree as a sign of quality. This is a significant miscalculation.



© Can Stock Photo - csp4757040

I recently observed quite a few Head-start programs and day care centers where the lead teacher (holding a bachelor’s degree) exhibited a lack of knowledge regarding child development (inappropriate classroom practices) to say the least. The curriculum was not age or developmentally appropriate for 3 and 4 year olds. The classroom environment exhibited no signs of clearly defined areas or any signs of developmentally appropriate practices.



THE VOICE

Issue Number 1

The crisis

I recently had a discussion with a colleague regarding two significant issues:

- Suspension of preschool children (which is on the increase)
- More preschool children being labeled and placed in special education as they enter kindergarten.

These two issues speak volumes. State policymakers are concerned with closing the achievement gap and preparing all children to succeed in school. This places significant pressure on early childhood educators who often engage in inappropriate classroom practices.



The crisis continued

The problem that remains is the fact that:

- The early childhood workforce must be knowledgeable about child development in order to engage in developmentally appropriate classroom practices that engages children in meaningful learning experiences.
- Parents must be knowledgeable about what quality early childhood education really entails.
- The early childhood arena must change their perception regarding teacher qualification. **It is essential to understand that quality education is not contingent on a bachelor's degree.**



Furthermore, the early childhood years are delicate years in children's lives. Understanding children and their families are a vital component to facilitating a positive learning experience for children.