

Partnership Between the Early Childhood Program and the CDA Candidate

Many researchers have expressed the importance of meaningful experiences during the early childhood years. As a result, the current trend in the field of early childhood education is the push for high quality early care and learning. Although for some, the concept of “quality” may vary depending on perception and philosophy, the main theme that resonates within the early childhood arena is the need for early childhood educators to obtain their Child Development Associate (CDA). Early childhood leaders often say that the CDA is the best first step; however, we at Destiny Early Childhood Consulting & Developmental Services, LLC. perceive that the CDA is not just the best first step, but the CDA is the vehicle to helping early childhood educators and leaders understand what developmentally appropriate practices (DAP) looks like in their classrooms.

One main challenge that CDA candidates are often faced with is, when they acquire a shift in their thinking due to course work, sometimes there is a lack of support from their programs to practice what they have learned in the CDA course. As educational leaders, we play a fundamental role in children’s early experiences; therefore, the partnership between the early childhood program and the CDA candidate is vital. Below are five tips that can support the CDA candidate in his/her CDA credentialing journey.

1. Help parents understand their children’s growth and development

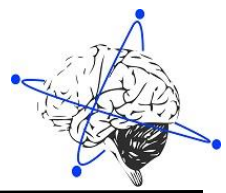
As you build a partnership with families, help families understand how children grow and develop. Families need to understand that early childhood education is not about academics, but it is about build skills as children learn through play.

2. Be open to new ideas

Change can be difficult. However, CDA candidates are excited to share their new insights and why they have a mental shift in their thinking. Be open to hear their exciting ideas. Ask them question such as: What will this look life is you make such changes? How will this benefit the children and their families? You can follow up by saying, let me think about this idea.

3. Validate their experience

When CDA candidates share their ideas, let them know that you have tuned-in by having a reflective conversation. Reflect back what they have said in order to have a productive dialogue about their CDA experience. Praise them for taking the initiative to not only participate in the CDA program, but also praise them for being willing and open to provide insight into their experiences.



P.O. Box 282 Hamburg, NJ 07419
Phone: (973) 827-4857

Email: Consult@destinyearly.childhood.org
Website: www.destinyearlychildhood.org

4. Provide the opportunity for powerful interactions

During staff meeting, provide the opportunity for CDA candidates to share their ideas and experiences with other staff members. Such an opportunity can provide a collaborative culture of team building and a desire in other staff members to also take that first step towards their CDA credential.

5. Follow-up

CDA candidates sometimes experience apprehension during the phase of the final assessment process. Follow-up with them, provide support, and provide encouragement. Above all, follow-up with complementing the CDA candidate's accomplishments and highlight their accomplishments within the program.

The CDA candidate's credentialing journey is very valuable because together early childhood leaders and the candidate have the opportunity to impact the early childhood arena. This collaboration can also promote the idea of "from theory to practice" as candidates are provided with the opportunity to exemplify developmentally appropriate practices within their early childhood classrooms.

For more information,

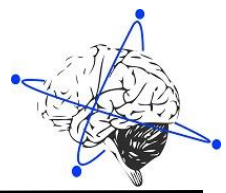
Contact us at (973) 827-4857

Or

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Developmental Services, LLC.



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Early childhood experiences causes structural changes in the brain