



ChildCareGroup

8585 North Stemmons Freeway

Suite 500 South

Dallas, TX 75247-3839

www.ChildCareGroup.org

Address Correction Requested

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. Postage Paid
Dallas, Texas
Permit No. 3061



ChildCareGroup

ChildCareGroup's Semi-Annual Newsletter
for those who care for and about young children

Fall 2006

Child at the Center

In This Issue

- P1 *Building Relationships: Communicating With Parents*
- P2 *Why Children Need Ongoing Nurturing Relationships: The Benefits of An Inclusive Education: Making It Work*
- P3 *Pre-K Education for Children of Military Service Members and Reservists: Steps to Achieving NAEYC Accreditation*
- P4 *Forms: Family and Caregiver Notes*

Since 1901, ChildCareGroup has pioneered exemplary child care solutions for families, providers, employers, and the community.

Our mission is to promote, deliver, and expand the best child care services available outside the home.

Every day, ChildCareGroup is responsible for providing or managing the care of more than 14,000 children from low-income families.



The printing of this publication has been made possible by the generosity of KAPLAN Early Learning Company.



Building Relationships: Communicating With Parents

Caregivers and parents who recognize how hard the daily separation is for both parent and child understand the need to develop a relationship that supports the connection of the child to his or her family. Parents and staff come to the relationship with different areas of responsibility and different objectives:

- Caregivers are responsible for all of the children in their care; parents are responsible only for their own children.
- A caregivers' objectives are usually long-range and developmental. Parents' objectives are most often immediate and behavioral.

These differences in perspective are real. Yet they shouldn't get in the way of relationship building; they provide the *foundation* for it.

Like any relationship, the parent/caregiver partnership takes work. The primary task is to develop effective communication around what is in the *best interest of the child*. The partnership works best in an atmosphere in which there is mutual respect, lack of criticism, acceptance of and respect for each other's perspective, and a genuine interest in getting to know and help one another.

The most important interactions with parents occur during the daily *hellos* and *goodbyes*. Encouraging parents to visit, stay and play, and eat with their children whenever possible creates an open, inclusive environment that makes leaving their children with someone else easier and more acceptable. The exchange of information around the kind of night the child had, how the child is feeling, and what types of activities he or she participated in while in care during the day provides the framework for daily interactions.

Having important information about what is happening at home allows the caregiver to understand and respond to subtle or dramatic changes in a child's behavior. Knowing the same caregiver will be there each morning offers a sense of security to the parent and child as they leave each other for the day. Sharing information regarding a child's day—something special, wonderful, funny, or simply an observation—can help a parent feel he or she has participated in their child's experiences.



We have designed two forms for you and the families in your program to use to better communicate with each other (see page 4).

Building Relationships (continued from page 1)

These sample forms acknowledge and support the importance of the parent's need to share in their child's day and can be used as a communication tool between the provider and the families they care for. When shared back and forth, these notes can help reinforce the bond between the parent and child and strengthen the parent/caregiver relationship.

FAMILY NOTES	
Date: _____	_____
month	date year day of week
To (caregiver): _____	
From (parents of): _____	
How is the child feeling today? _____	
Has anything out of the ordinary happened since the child's last day in care? _____	
Any unusual behaviors or concerns? _____	
Any new accomplishments, developments, or achievements? _____	
Any changes at home that the caregiver should be aware of? _____	

CAREGIVER NOTES	
Date: _____	_____
month	date year day of week
To (parents of): _____	
From (caregiver): _____	
How did the child feel today? _____	
Any changes in routine the family should be aware of? _____	
Any unusual behaviors or concerns? _____	
What did the child enjoy today? _____	
Any new accomplishments, developments, or achievements? _____	

ChildCareGroup, a not-for-profit organization, offers its services, programs, and activities to eligible participants without regard to race, gender, national origin, color, age, religion, disability or political belief. \$52,413,966 or 95.1% of the cost of ChildCareGroup's programs are provided by the federal government; \$2,725,559 or 4.9% are provided by non-federal government sources. Persons who wish to receive information about participation in ChildCareGroup's programs may call 214.630.7911.





ChildCareGroup's revolutionary model of care, Relationship-Centered Child Care® (RC³™), focuses on building relationships with families and children.



How well children do in school and in adult life is often determined by their interactions with caring adults at very young ages.



Why Children Need Ongoing Nurturing Relationships

"Although consistent nurturing relationships with significant adults are taken for granted by most of us as a necessity for babies and young children, we often do not put this commonly held belief into practice. Pioneers, such as Erik Erikson, Anna Freud, and Dorothy Burlingham, revealed that to "pass successfully through the stages of early childhood, children require sensitive, nurturing care to build capacities for trust, empathy, and compassion."

"Supportive, warm, nurturing emotional interactions with infants and young children help the central nervous system grow appropriately. Listening to the human voice, for example, helps babies learn to distinguish sounds and develop language. Exchanging gestures helps babies learn to perceive and respond to emotional cues and form a sense of self."

"Relationships also teach children which behaviors are appropriate and which are not. As children's behavior becomes more complex in the second year of life, they learn from their caregivers' facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, and words what kinds of behavior lead to approval or disapproval. Patterns are built up through the give-and-take between children and caregivers. Along with behavior, however, emotions, wishes, and self-image are also coming into being. The emotional tone and subtle interactions in relationships are vital to who we are and what we learn."

Excerpted from *The Irreducible Needs of Children* by T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. and Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D. Scholastic Early Childhood Today, September 2006

The Benefits of An Inclusive Education: Making It Work

Excerpted from *Inclusive Education Benefits, Early Years are Learning Years*; National Association for the Education of Young Children, www.naeyc.org

In an increasing number of early childhood programs around the country, teachers, children, and parents are discovering the benefits of educating young children with special needs together with their same-age peers. Since learning is so important in the early years, this is the best time for children to begin to respect all people's differences and the contributions each individual makes.

Children with disabilities are, first and foremost children, and then children who may need support or adaptations for learning. The term "special needs" refers to a wide range of developmental disabilities or learning needs that may occur in different areas and to varying degrees. Traditionally, children with special needs were pulled out of regular classrooms and grouped together as if all their needs were alike. Relatively few children with disabilities were served in community-based early childhood programs apart from Head Start or public school programs, until the 1992 passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Early childhood teachers' strong knowledge of child development helps them to successfully teach young children with all talents, interests, and abilities. In effective inclusive programs, teachers adapt activities to include all students, even though their individual goals may be different. At times, early childhood professionals and children may benefit from the assistance of related professionals such as physical therapists and other school personnel who recognize children's individual interests and strengths.

Some raise concerns about the advisability of creating inclusive environments: *Will inclusive classrooms hinder the academic success of children without special needs? How will an inclusive environment meet the needs of children with disabilities? Will children without special needs lose out on teacher time? How can early childhood professionals access resources, support, and training?* While these questions are valid, parents and teachers will find that creative modifications help all children's learning.

Research shows that the benefits of inclusive classrooms reach beyond academics. This is particularly important for young children, who learn best when they feel safe, secure, and at home in their classrooms. An environment that encourages young children's social and emotional development will stimulate all aspects of their learning.



Early childhood professionals who have successfully included young children with special needs note that, contrary to some expectations, they needed few adaptations to meet the needs of all children. They report not necessarily needing more staff, money, or expertise, but rather support from peers and specialists, willingness to adapt to new environments, and positive relationships with families.

Professional development programs, supplemental support staff, and teamwork by parents and program staff will help achieve inclusion's ultimate goal: to provide a challenging and supportive educational experience for all children.

Pre-K Education for Children of Military Service Members and Reservists

Commentary by Susan Hoff, President/CEO ChildCareGroup KERA 90.1 - Dallas, TX - 2006



"Strong bipartisan support" is a term I rarely hear applied to anything related to the Texas Legislature. But in the recent special session, both sides of the aisle were in full agreement on a new bill which will benefit the kids of servicemen and women across the state. Beginning this fall, all three and four year olds of active duty military and reservists along with the children of those who have been injured or killed in action will be eligible to attend free public school pre-kindergarten classes. It seems like the least we can do for those who are serving our country.

Military life is tough on kids; constant moves, absent moms or dads (or sometimes both), and the underlying fear that they might never come home are just the way things are. And those fears, coupled with the fact that many military families don't even earn enough money to afford preschool tuition, make the need for this new bill crystal clear.

Consistency is important for all children. It's especially critical for those whose lives are generally unpredictable and often scary. Good early childhood education gives little kids a solid foundation for learning, along with the emotional support they crave. Currently, Texas school districts are required to provide pre-k for four year olds who come from low-income or homeless families or those who can't speak English. Last year, about 176,000 four year olds filled Texas pre-k classrooms. The new mandate could add up to 5,400 more. Unfortunately, this sudden influx could spell trouble for some already overcrowded districts, especially those in large urban areas and those close to military bases.

Our public schools don't have enough classroom space to serve all the kids who are eligible for pre-k and we don't have enough money to build all the extra schools needed to serve them. Additionally, there's growing public support to provide pre-k for all kids. A recent United Way of Texas poll found that more than 70 percent of Texans support universal pre-k. Districts need to reach out beyond the schoolhouse doors in order to make room for the children of military families and the thousands of others who need but can't get into pre-k.

Community agencies, like ChildCareGroup, are working with area school districts and the Texas Education Agency to come up with some creative solutions. For instance, placing public school pre-k teachers in neighborhood child care centers will open up additional classrooms without asking taxpayers for money to build more schools.

As uncertainties about logistics remain, I am certain that lawmakers have done the right thing for the children of men and women who sacrifice so much for our country. Texas is the first in the nation to take this step. Let's hope the rest of the country will follow its lead in providing this critical service to those who so bravely serve us.

Steps to Achieving NAEYC Accreditation

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recently restructured the early childhood program accreditation system. It now requires programs to complete four steps to achieve NAEYC Accreditation.

NAEYC views these steps and requirements as a bridge to help early childhood programs, and the early childhood field in general, make the transition to higher levels of program quality over the next few years. The four steps and their purposes are:

- **Enrolling in Self-Study:** To encourage programs to participate in a structured approach for improvement that considers all the necessary components of a high quality program.
- **Becoming an Applicant:** To ensure only eligible programs submit applications; program leaders understand what is involved; and the program has the capacity to complete a comprehensive, formal program self assessment within one year.
- **Becoming a Candidate:** To ensure the program is able to support quality and to increase the probability of a successful site assessment.
- **Meeting the Program Standards:** To provide an independent assessment that the program fully meets NAEYC's Early Childhood Program Standards.

For more information on how your program can become accredited, visit www.naeyc.org/accreditation.