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Military Child Care Providers and Challenging Behaviors of Early Childhood Students

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Military Child Care Providers and Challenging Behaviors

by

Donna J Blackburn

MA, Cameron University, 2001

BA, California State University, San Bernardino, 1994

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

May 2016

Abstract

Job satisfaction of early childhood teachers in military programs and satisfaction changes as teachers deal with challenging behaviors in the workplace was the focus of this study. The goal of The National Association for the Education of Young Children is to ensure quality programming that promotes positive child development experiences. Child development experiences are impacted by teaching staff, partnerships, administration, and the children's' environment. This case study examined the specific environment and behaviors that military childcare providers experience at a small military installation and explored how working with children with challenging behaviors impacts the job satisfaction of early childhood teachers. Herzberg's 2-factor theory provided the conceptual framework on how satisfaction and dissatisfaction can exist in the same environment. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and observations of the work environment with 11 participants ranging from 23 to 56 years of age at the military installation. The participants were selected for being part of the military community and early childhood teachers at the study site. Data were open coded and thematically analyzed. Findings indicated that the teachers at this site have a dual perception of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the workplace that stems from experiences with coworker relationships, dealing with policy and procedure changes, and adjusting to the varying behaviors of children. The implications for social change include providing research findings on early childhood teacher satisfaction to the study site so that administrators can develop a plan to improve military early childhood care provider job satisfaction, which may improve the quality of the environment of the military child.

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Dedication

To my husband, David, and my children, Devin, Darian, and Daniel, who have stood by me, supported me, and prayed with me to finish this project. To my parents, Robert and Ruby Hampton, who never ceased to encourage me to follow my dreams, while supporting me through the process; I owe all my success to them.

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Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

Military child development program administrators have struggled with developing and implementing quality care plans for decades, which led to the development of the Military Child Care Act (MCCA) of 1989. According to Zellman, Gates, Moini, and Suttorp (2009), the Department of Defense (DOD) is the largest employer-sponsored source of high quality childcare for members of the military and their families. Any failure to maintain a high level of quality childcare runs the risk of creating problems for military parents; without quality childcare, military members with young children will have to divide their attention between commitment to family and mission preparedness. In order to maintain a high level of childcare excellence, military childcare programs began to adhere to the standards set by the DOD in 1989 as part of the MCAA (Howe, 2000). Since 1989, the MCCA has required that all military programs maintain accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This process typically ensures that the quality of programming at military childcare facilities exceeds that of local licensing standards for childcare facilities (Zellman et al., 2009). A major part of ensuring that military childcare programs can deliver high quality services is by building and sustaining a high quality workforce.

It is widely understood that childcare programs are a necessity in today's busy world. In military communities, the children who are enrolled in military childcare programs often spend between 10 and 12 hours a day with their teachers. As such, it is important to provide a safe environment for these children. It is also important to structure a childcare environment that will have a variety of engaging and developmentally appropriate activities. In other words, the goal of

military childcare centers is for the children to get the most out of their daily experience by exploring their environment through hands-on learning and positive interactions with adults and peers (NAEYC, 2008). In child development programs, these experiences and interactions are often organized into a series of activities that cover all areas of a child's development, including social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Early childhood programs, both military and civilian, have a social and moral obligation to ensure that quality childcare programs and environments are available for children. This is why it is important to ensure that the adults and teachers who work in military childcare programs feel strong, confident, positive, and are satisfied in their work.

According to NAEYC (2013), Montgomery, AL, has approximately 85 child development programs, only nine of which are accredited. Seven of the nine accredited child development programs are federally funded Headstart programs for disadvantaged children. Eligibility for Headstart programs is based on total family income; as such, most military families have to rely on the military childcare programs that are not based on income. Since military families rely on the military community to provide quality child development programs, ensuring that the teachers and the environment where parents leave their children meet this quality standard is important.

In 1989, Congress passed the MCCA. As part of this legislation, Congress stated that all military programs would need to seek and achieve national accreditation standards for childcare and child development, which included mandatory training and education for early childhood teachers at military childcare centers. The intention behind the act was to ensure that military childcare centers meet health and safety standards, have shorter wait lists, have decreased staff

turnover, as well as subsidize childcare programs to make them more affordable to military families (Howe, 2000). Military childcare programs continue the ongoing quest to maintain quality childcare services, and the DOD has also done its part through evaluation and observation of programs to ensure that they provide quality services. One way in which quality care is ensured at military childcare centers is through the use of four unannounced inspections per year by DOD inspectors (Department of Army, 1997). At these unscheduled inspections, the perception of staff satisfaction is taken into account, primarily because staff satisfaction can affect staff turnover, occurrence of child abuse allegations, parental involvement, and overall quality of child development programs (Martini, 2001).

Definition of the Problem

School administrators have often struggled with how to provide a stable, quality teacher workforce in all teaching settings (Perrachione, Rosser, & Peterson, 2008). This is also the case for military childcare centers. One way that administrators can learn what factors will impact teacher job satisfaction is through the process of research (Bolin, 2007). Perrachione et al. (2008) explored what factors impact job satisfaction and retention within teaching settings, but their work is of limited utility, as it did not specifically explore military childcare centers. Questions remain concerning what will impact an early childhood teacher's levels of job satisfaction in military childcare centers. In other words, it is still unclear whether or not there is either high or low job satisfaction and/or high or low stress among childcare providers who work at a military childcare center (Huysman, 2008; Perrachione et al., 2008).

It stands to reason that job satisfaction will be related to job stress among childcare teachers at military childcare centers who deal specifically with challenging behaviors among

their students. Although this issue has not been directly addressed within the literature to date, Adera and Bullock (2010) have suggested that a high teacher turnover rate in childcare programs is most likely due in part to dealing with children who have behavior and emotional disorders. Since military childcare programs are inclusive and allow special needs children to participate within regular programming, childcare teachers on military bases must deal with the behaviors that special needs children generate. As Zellman et al. (2009) noted, the behaviors that challenging children generate can be overwhelming.

In addition to problem behaviors, many childcare teachers also have to deal with their own job expectations. Juozaitiene and Simonaitiene (2011) found that lower job satisfaction is related to teachers' expectations not being met, mostly due to the fact that their goals are unrealistic. Teachers from a variety of areas who leave the teaching field often report having low job satisfaction because they did not get the support they needed (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). In contrast, teachers who stay in the field tend to have a higher satisfaction because they also have a higher commitment to working with children with disabilities and challenging behaviors (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). The teachers who stay in the field often change their teaching style and expectations to meet the needs of the environment and the children. Many teachers leave the field due to perceived lack of support and poor work conditions, including dealing with behaviors.

Rationale

Problem at the Local Level

Locally, Southern Alabama is home to a small air force base and annex that is the intellectual center for airpower education for the United States Air Force. The military

community in Southern Alabama is unique because it is home to the Air University, an institution that hosts airmen and officers and their families as they complete their professional military education. The location also provides a stable environment to support the families who are permanently stationed at the base. Child and Youth Services provides a variety of activities for families on the installation or base, including sports, respite care, daily child development, and extracurricular events for children. There is one child development center and one school-age program on the base and the annex; both of these programs are tasked with supporting and enriching the military community.

The installation undergoes a comprehensive annual inspection performed by the DOD. This inspection takes a close look at all aspects of childcare facility operations, personnel policies and procedures, financial operations, and overall effectiveness of the organization (Schmalzried, 1999). Every year, the child development programs comply with Air Force Instruction (AFI) 34-248 to ensure that they either meet or exceed the most current DOD inspection standards and the latest standards of the NAEYC (De Vita & Montilla, 2003). All military programs are mandated to implement and maintain best practices in safety, curriculum, policy, and procedures (Schmalzried, 1999). The multidisciplinary inspections conducted on the instillation's childcare facility review all aspects of facility and program operations and report the results back to the organization (Martini, 2001). Family services and child development are a large part of the services reviewed. The inspection team looks at the feedback from the NAEYC accreditation report, which focuses on curriculum, programs provided to families, and teachers' perspectives. In addition, this inspection report compares and contrasts the results with the military standards for care. From these data, the program administrators get a clear picture of

what activities and processes need to be modified and improved throughout the military installation's early childhood programs. The teachers' perspective is the key to implementing quality programming. This includes job satisfaction, perception of support from administration, and the teachers' perception of resources available to support them while performing their jobs (NAEYC, 2008).

Problem at the Educational Level

Previous researchers have pointed out that there is only a small amount of published research that examines the perceptions of teachers who work with children who have challenging behaviors (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Landers, Alter, & Servillio, 2008; Liu & Ramsey, 2008). Most of the published literature addresses job satisfaction in general and focuses on the correlation of generic factors like gender, experience of teacher, career status, and pay with job satisfaction (Bolin, 2007; Liu & Ramsey, 2008; Tickle, Chang, & Kim, 2011). On occasion, researchers have addressed the direct impact of behavior on job satisfaction and concur that the more stress a teacher feels while dealing with challenging behaviors, the lower his/her job satisfaction (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Giallo & Hayes, 2007). Morgan, Ludlow, Kitching, O'Leary, and Clarke (2010) have suggested that perceptions associated with specific events are often the most important factor in determining how teachers feel about job satisfaction. These specific events are often small occurrences that reinforce how the teacher is feeling, positive or negative (Morgan et al., 2010). The specific event could be something simple like a performance bonus, a particularly negative interaction with a challenging child, or a vacation.

Morgan et al. (2010) also noted how positive events in the workplace fortify motivation and resilience in spite of any negative feelings associated with the workplace. The importance

lies in the small but frequent positive experiences. The common goal of wanting to make a difference is not enough to keep teachers motivated and happy; therefore, support by management, strong leadership, and higher pay are needed to maintain a positive perception of the work environment (Moe, Pazzaglia, & Ronconi, 2010). Mixed emotions in the workplace, such as anger, elation, desperation, or pride are common; and overall perceptions are most affected by the frequency of the positive versus the negative events (Moe et al., 2010). Work by Juozaitiene and Simonaitiene (2011) focused on how positive events in the workplace impact teacher perceptions. They demonstrated that satisfaction increases when a teacher's attitude is positive, and also when they are being positively motivated. Juozaitiene and Simonaitiene and Grayson and Alvarez (2008) stated that job dissatisfaction comes when teachers' real experiences do not meet their expectations. Factors like pay, work conditions, management, age, and gender may influence a teacher's expectations, but overall satisfaction is definitely dependent on the organization and the employee perceptions of the workplace.

Problem in the Military Community

There is an ongoing struggle in military child development programs to maintain a teacher workforce that includes satisfied and strong teachers. The struggle arises when teachers' perception of job satisfaction changes as their expectations and actual real life experiences clash; this clash can lead to high turnover in teachers and poor quality interactions within the classroom. High turnover and poor quality interactions have a direct impact on the military childcare environment; therefore, it was important to research what impacts the teachers' job satisfaction in order to provide resources to better support the teacher workforce. There is no locatable research that directly examines how challenging behaviors impact a teacher's level of

job satisfaction within the context of a military childcare center. Consequently, a qualitative study that looks into the feelings, perceptions, and expectations of early childhood teachers at a military childcare center should serve to provide a resource to administrators to help support teachers before a negative perception of job satisfaction develops. The need for quality childcare in the military environment is paramount to family retention in the military community (Zellman et al., 2009).

Since there is a gap in the research surrounding how dealing with challenging behaviors in military early childhood settings impacts teacher job satisfaction, a qualitative case study was warranted. There is some research exploring teacher satisfaction in elementary and middle school environments (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008), but there is a gap in the research regarding the experience of early childhood teachers in a military childcare context. Early childhood programs that are accredited through national organizations like NAEYC survey teachers annually to assess satisfaction with the workplace (NAEYC, 2008), but there were no studies found that actually talk to the teachers to learn how the teachers really feel about working with children and the challenging behaviors that often arise. I conducted this qualitative case study to examine how changes in a teacher's perception of job satisfaction may impact the quality of his/her work. How teachers cope with the challenging behaviors that they encounter as part of their work and what teachers would change to make the impact of the behaviors less stressful are other valid concerns that were addressed by this study.

Problem Significance

A significant part of building a quality early childhood educational environment is to have a healthy and satisfied teacher workforce. In addition to the gap in the research on early

childhood teachers' perception of job satisfaction (Bolin, 2007), to date there is no locatable research that directly addresses how early childhood teachers' job satisfaction changes as they deal with challenging behaviors. The existing research does suggest that a teacher's job satisfaction will change when dealing with the challenging behaviors of children in their care (Adera & Bullock, 2010; Klassen & Anderson, 2009). Taking a closer look at how dealing with challenging behaviors of children impacts the perceptions of teacher job satisfaction may help administrators understand how to better support their staff. Having a better understanding of how challenging behaviors impact a teacher's feelings and perceptions will hopefully provide insight to better explain the influence that challenging behaviors have on a teacher's job satisfaction. Recognizing the impact that job satisfaction has on whether or not a teacher decides to persevere or leave a job can in turn help management and administrators take a proactive approach to supporting teachers, consequently improving the quality of the care that programs are providing.

Since 1993, the MCCA had been successful in obtaining two of its goals. Implementation of the MCCA has helped to improve the quality of childcare on military installations around the world, and it had also achieved the goal of making childcare more affordable to military families (Zellman & Johansen, 1998). Unfortunately, while the MCAA raised salaries and even increased staffing at military childcare centers, it did not address the support that the staff would need to continue to be successful. In accordance with the NAEYC (2008), taking a closer look at what makes teachers feel good, strong, and even more competent may give administrators some insight into what it takes to build a stronger workforce. Having a strong and stable workforce may provide the social change that is needed to ensure that children receive a positive learning experience.

In 1994, an outside organization conducted an evaluation of 50 military childcare centers and showed that the costs of accreditation and improving quality in the early childhood environment for children and teachers was low compared to the benefits that such changes would reap (Floyd & Phillips, 2013). The research led to an amendment to the MCCA in 1996 that provided momentum towards improving military childcare centers. NAEYC now includes a teacher satisfaction survey as part of the accreditation process and requires quality military childcare centers to survey teachers annually to maintain ongoing communication regarding teachers' insight and satisfaction.

It is important to understand how early childhood teachers are affected by their daily interactions and responsibilities towards the children they work with, especially those who exhibit challenging behaviors. With careful exploration into how teachers at military childcare centers feel about their jobs, the environmental conditions, children's behaviors, and perceived support from administration, insight to what impacts teachers to be dissatisfied and unhappy (or conversely, satisfied and happy) can be found. Administrators can use these discoveries to develop strong incentives to promote more positive satisfaction, which in turn may lead to a more consistent and satisfied teacher workforce.

The purpose of this research project was to explore how dealing with children with challenging behaviors in a military early childhood program changes a teacher's perception of his/her job satisfaction. Understanding how to build a stronger teacher workforce in the context of a military childcare center could also benefit military families by improving the quality and consistency of care in the child development programs that military children attend. Quality child development programs provide the social support that military families deserve. Military

families endure countless challenges throughout peace, war, and military life in general, but society rarely recognizes or directly supports the strengths and assets of the children and families (Park, 2011).

Research Question

Exploring the impact of dealing with challenging behaviors in the work environment has the potential to lead to a more positive experience in early childhood for teachers, children, and families. Through the use of a qualitative case study, information was gathered directly from teachers regarding their perceptions of job satisfaction and how they change over the course of their experience. Looking at what impacts teacher job satisfaction provided information to improve the work environment and teachers' perceptions.

The guiding question for this study was the following: Do the perceptions of early childhood teachers change as they deal with challenging behaviors in the work environment? The minimal amount of research available on how early childhood providers feel about job satisfaction and how teachers feel about dealing with challenging behaviors has prompted the interest in this project. Using a case study to take an in-depth look at how local early childhood teachers feel about working with children with challenging behaviors may provide some insight into how to better support these early childhood teachers in their positions.

Definitions

Challenging behaviors: For this study, challenging behaviors may include diagnosed and undiagnosed special needs and various forms of undesirable behavior. Children with challenging behaviors are clearly visible in a classroom, as they hit, bite, kick, and "erupt like volcanoes" on a moment's notice often without provocation (Eberhardt-Wright, 2002).

Job satisfaction: Covers a broad scope of attitudes, feelings, and perceptions. Mahmood, Nudrat, Asdaque, Nawaz, and Haider (2011) defined job satisfaction as "a set of favorable or unfavorable feelings and emotions with which employees view their work"(p. 203). For this study, teacher satisfaction is defined as how teachers feel about their work environment, including interactions with peers, management, and the children.

NAEYC: The National Association for the Education of Young Children. NAEYC has been one of the leading accreditation organizations for the early childhood field for over 80 years. NAEYC sets standards for what is developmentally appropriate in the classroom, teacher standards and qualifications, health and safety guidelines, educational standards for students and teachers, and overall quality guidelines and standards (NAEYC, 2008).

Self-efficacy: This concept is a teacher's ability to reflect and modify his/her own performance to change his/her perception of satisfaction and self-worth (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010).

Review of the Literature

Teacher job satisfaction has been a topic of discussion for decades. Organizations like NAEYC (2008) and the Department of Education have been looking at how to retain good teachers and how to improve the workplace for those that stay. Even further back, researchers explored what may lie behind the job. In his 1959 two factor theory, Herzberg proposed that teachers' satisfaction and dissatisfaction may function together and not necessarily opposite of each other in the same work place. According to the two factor theory (Perrachione et al., 2008), job satisfaction is influenced by intrinsic factors (teaching and working with students), and job dissatisfaction is impacted by extrinsic factors (working conditions like overload or salary). In

this theory, the extrinsic factors do not contribute to job satisfaction but do impact job dissatisfaction. Intrinsic factors in turn lead to job satisfaction, but the absence of intrinsic factors does not necessarily lead to job dissatisfaction. In theory, if administrators can find the extrinsic factors that impact job dissatisfaction and change the factors to have a more positive impact on teachers, perhaps job satisfaction will increase and teachers will perform better regardless of whether they are working with challenging behaviors and/or special needs. As such, this investigation was based on the two factor theory.

The literature that deals with teachers' job satisfaction and dealing with challenging behaviors is minimal. There are some articles on overall teacher satisfaction and dealing with special needs, but there is limited information on teacher satisfaction, challenging behavior, and the military child development system. What little information that has been found is presented below.

Teacher Job Satisfaction in the Early Childhood Community

Although the work of Grayson and Alvarez (2008) addressed the turnover that the teaching profession is suffering, their work focused more on issues related to teacher stress as associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. They agreed that most teachers enter the field to make a difference, but that this alone does not keep them in the field. As stress increases, tolerance for behavior problems and students' decreases, children's negative behaviors increase, and the teachers burn out. Grayson and Alvarez also noted the difference between male and female teachers. Male teachers depersonalize and detach from situations, while female teachers become emotionally exhausted. It is important to address teacher burnout because it impacts students, workers, and the overall community. Adera and

Bullock (2010) used mixed methods (i.e., electronic surveys and focus groups) to explore how the teachers felt about working with children with emotional and behavioral disorders. They found that stressors come from inside and outside the classroom. They also agreed that the inability to manage stressors leads to undesired turnover. It is their belief that teachers who stay are simply more committed while teachers who move on are overwhelmed and unprepared for the reality of the classroom.

Landers et al. (2008) and Grayson and Alvarez (2008) found that student behavior and discipline problems are the primary reasons given for teacher stress and burnout. Grayson and Alvarez also attributed teacher stress to work overload, poor salary, and poor career structure. It is imperative for administrators and teachers to address the impact of dealing with challenging behaviors early in the educational setting. Early intervention is the key to improving a wide range of social, emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes for children with challenging behaviors, which in turn can impact teacher stress and job satisfaction (Giallo & Hayes, 2007). In spite of the research surrounding job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, little has been shown to reflect how teachers' perceptions have changed over the years, and most studies do not address how societal and educational changes impact teacher job satisfaction (Klassen & Anderson, 2009). Klassen and Anderson (2009) used anonymous questionnaires and agreed that the nature of the work, personal relationships, salary, and work conditions are all factors that impact the perception of teachers.

One research study took another stance altogether. Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) believed that while self-efficacy is difficult to define and measure, it has a noteworthy effect on job satisfaction and burnout. Their focus was on the external factors, like the student's home

environment, that limit what a teacher can do. Skaalvik and Skaalvik also found that self-efficacy is grounded in social cognitive theory and emphasizes that a teacher's ability to self-regulate and self-reflect will work to change his/her own perception of satisfaction and self-worth. This theory helps clarify how teachers are responsible for their own job satisfaction through self-reflection and perseverance when faced with obstacles.

Bolin (2007) also attributed the perception of job satisfaction to external factors, but he attributed the influence to leadership, perceived social status, exam stress, and personal background. Bolin took a close look at the expectations of performance that teachers have, such as students' exam performance and perceived social status. In other words, Bolin felt that teachers believe that how their students perform on exams is a direct reflection on them, and this may alter how the teachers' peers perceive their teaching ability. While Bolin attributed satisfaction to external factors, he also supported the two factor theory that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not on the same continuum. This supports the idea that decreased dissatisfaction may not lead to improved satisfaction.

Military Community Environment Impact on Teachers

The military community has its own culture and organization that impacts how the children respond to their environment (Campbell, Brown, & Okawa, 2011). Teachers who have to deal with military children consequently have to deal with the children's stress as well. Campbell et al. (2011) also stated that military children in general experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, and behavior problems that stem from a constant exposure to unique military stressors like long family separations, stress related to dangerous environments, and long parental work hours. Many teachers who work in this environment have no experience or

education to support them and end up feeling overwhelmed and frustrated (Adera & Bullock, 2010). According to Dake, Fisher, Pumpian, Haring, and Breen (1993), teachers do not feel like pretraining prepares them, and organizations that they work for do not provide adequate support. This research is outdated, and unfortunately, there is minimal research to contradict or support the theory.

Edwin, McKinley, and Talbert (2010) explored how to support children of military families during challenging times. They developed extension programs to provide support to military communities with large deployment numbers and found that military youth live lives that are often disrupted and turned upside down. The authors recommended that these children receive additional support through educational and enrichment programs in order to survive their parents' deployments and to control external military stressors successfully (Edwin et al., 2010). In order to provide positive support to teachers and children, administrators of military youth programs partnered with 4H Programs so that both programs could provide training and support to the community, child and youth programs, and families. Fitzsimons and Krause-Parello (2009) further explored supporting the military teacher and community by providing coping strategies to face the stress of dealing with the war on terrorism daily. While research is limited on the effects of deployment, it does imply that children in the military community do exhibit loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Without coping strategies and support, these emotional outcomes can lead to challenging behaviors in school (Fitzsimons & Krause-Parello, 2009). Teachers who deal with military children can benefit from gaining knowledge of the military community and an overall awareness of military life. While the research does not show long-term effects on school performance, it does show that there can be a learning gap (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). The key

to promoting the success of the military child and the teacher is to recognize the strengths and attributes of the children, and to reinforce strengths with positive interactions and support (Park, 2011).

Implications

More research was needed regarding the effects of dealing with challenging behavior on teacher satisfaction. In the military community where the environment is ever changing and stressful to the whole family, the child is impacted directly by how the community, teachers, and family respond to this behavior (Park, 2011; Zellman et al., 2009).

In 2012, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies published a report in Child Care Aware that stated that there were approximately 1.9 million military children, ranging in ages from newborn to 18 years old. Some 1.3 million are school age, 765,000 had active duty parents, and approximately 225,000 had a parent who was deployed. More than 700,000 children have experienced the deployment of one or more parents since 2001 (Child Care Aware, 2012).

It is important to ensure that the military child is not forgotten and that they get quality supplemental care through teachers and community caregivers. Teachers are impacted by the children's behavior and often lack the resources or training to respond appropriately. The data collected during this qualitative study will shed light on how teachers feel and how dealing with challenging behavior impacts them. The insight gained on how to better support the teachers while preparing for the workforce and during each job will be beneficial. If administrators have a better understanding of what teachers are dealing with and how to support them, perhaps job

satisfaction will increase, and turnover and dissatisfaction will decrease, leading to a more stable workforce (Bolin, 2007).

The results showed the need for more training and development for teachers. Since formal education is not required in this field, and formal requirements vary between states, it is important to develop a training development plan that will support all teachers working with young children. The training plan developed from this study may support the small military community that is being studied, but the foundation for the training plan can be replicated and shared throughout the military community.

Summary

Since military child development programs have such a large impact on the military community and the overall wellbeing of the military family, it is important to gain insight into how teachers in these programs become stronger. Having stronger teachers means less turnover and more stability and support for the military child. In light of the Military Child Care Act of 1989, military child development programs have been under evaluation and assessment to ensure that these programs not only provide quality programming, but also exceed state licensing standards (Zellman et al., 2009). This project was designed to look deeper into how dealing with challenging behavior impacts the teachers' perception of job satisfaction. A qualitative study allowed me to interview teachers about how they feel about dealing with challenging behaviors as well as explore what impact their training and preparation has on their feelings and perceptions. What resources teachers feel would improve job satisfaction could provide a resource to administrators and lead to stronger more satisfied teachers. According to Neugebauer (2005), even with all of the improvements that the military child development program has

undergone in the last 20 years, there is still room for improvement. Since the rise in deployments has shown significant impact on military families, Congress has added 1.5 million hours of extended care for families with a parent deployed (Neugebauer, 2005). Deployment puts a strain on families and adds additional pressure to teachers and the overall community.

Section 1 addressed that teacher job satisfaction is a widely held concern that has not been adequately researched. In the literature review, I explained how teachers, in general, have been impacted by conditions in the workplace and explained why it was important that this project focused on addressing the perception of early childhood teachers, specifically in the military community, regarding job satisfaction and dealing with challenging behaviors. Unfortunately, I did not find many articles on teacher's job satisfaction with regard to early childhood providers and even less with military providers. I worked closely with the Walden librarian and we exhausted our resources. The articles cited in this study are the most significant to the topic and the most current that were available. While this was frustrating for me as a working scholar, this also prompted me to want to continue my research even more because this topic needs more attention, due to the importance of early education. I am inspired to continue to explore how to become an even better scholar and resource in my field.

In Section 2, I discuss the qualitative case study that will be implemented through face to face interviews. This section also includes information about the participants, where they come from, and how they were selected through purposeful sampling. Finally, Section 2 addresses how the data were collected and analyzed through thematic coding.

Section 2: Methodology

Introduction

In Section 1 of this study, job satisfaction of early childhood teachers in a military setting was examined to find the source of perceived job satisfaction and dissatisfaction. A literature review was conducted to explore what factors impact perceived job satisfaction from the early childhood teacher's point of view. In Section 2 of this study, I explain the methodology used to explore this topic. The methodology begins with a short explanation of the research question and how it relates to the case study at hand. Next, the setting, participants, and selection process are explained, including the procedures taken to protect all participants from harm.

Section 2 also provides an overview of the data collection procedures, including how data were collected, coded, and assessed. This section also includes an explanation of the role of the researcher. Finally, the process used to analyze the data is explained, along with an explanation of credibility and a discussion of discrepancies.

Research Design

Design and Approach

This project was conducted as a qualitative case study. The purpose was to explore how dealing with challenging behaviors in the work environment has the potential to impact the experience in early childhood for teachers and their perceived teacher job satisfaction. A case study approach was chosen to investigate the phenomenon within its context and because the behaviors being observed could not be controlled (Yin, 2003). In this study, I used a focused interview and direct observation to gather evidence to support the phenomenon. The case study produced much more detailed information than statistics allow (Becker, Bryman, & Ferguson,

2012). This approach gave teachers an opportunity to share in depth views of their perceptions of job satisfaction.

Participants

Participants were chosen from a military child development program in Southern Alabama. The sample of 11 volunteers was selected through purposeful sampling from the lead teachers and assistant teachers at the organization. The only required criterion was that the participant was a lead or assistant teacher and that he/she was employed by a military program with at least one year of experience. Since this was a case study with only 11 participants, each teacher needed to complete the interview and was given the opportunity to answer all the questions and add any personal insights surrounding working in the military child development program. Although the child development centers were small, the teachers offered a variety of perspectives coming from a diverse selection of employees. The diversity of the staff is an added benefit stemming from working with military programs. The method of purposeful sampling was used to ensure that the participants came from a sample with the needed criterion to gain more information and/or confirm things already known about the organization (Merriam, 2009). Purposeful sampling is common and adequate for use during qualitative research. Criterion sampling was used to ensure that only lead teachers and assistant teachers who work in the military early childhood community participated. Criterion sampling allowed for centralized data collection from only pertinent sources (Palys, 2012). The sample was small and limited to a minimum of 10 participants to ensure that each person was given ample time to share in-depth descriptive information. This qualitative research design using interviews was chosen in order to get an in-depth narrative from each participant. Interviews allow for individual expression or

explanations (Yin, 2003). Sufficient information from each participant was obtained through the interview and environment observation. Due to the small setting, it was not possible to interview a larger number of teachers, which also supports allowing the small number of participants to express full narratives through the interview setting.

In order to ensure that the participants had the requested background, criterion sampling was used to narrow the pool down to participants with the following characteristics:

Each participant was employed by a military child development program with at least one year of experience.

Each participant was either a lead teacher or an assistant teacher, which simply means that they are responsible for a primary group of children.

The demographics of each participant were not the main focus of the study, but they were recorded on a demographic questionnaire including age, race, gender, and educational status. While these items were not the main focus, they could have produced variability in the data. The study was focused on the 11 participants who met the above criteria. The data collected were based on the questions presented earlier to take a closer look at the perceived job satisfaction of military early childhood teachers and observations.

An informal request was made through the childcare administrator for Air Force Base programs to participate. Once the project proposal was accepted and approved by the institutional review board (IRB), a formal request was made and I went to the child development center and the annex for an introduction to site supervisors to request access to the participants. I did not have interactions with the participants before the start of the study to minimize researcher bias. Once the project was approved, I contacted the participants in person to introduce the

project study and discuss the purpose. An informed consent form was distributed and discussed with all participants, and the form included the title and purpose of the study. Each participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and clarify understanding. Each participant was informed that he/she was a volunteer and free to withdraw from the study at any time. The procedure and interview process was explained along with an explanation of each participant's rights and access to results. The consent form also contained information regarding confidentiality. Each participant was asked to sign and date the consent form before the process continued. It was imperative that each participant was informed of the project's purpose and confidentiality. Due to the nature of a qualitative interview, information could have arisen from the interview that the participant was not expecting; therefore, all steps were taken to protect the participant from harm and to maintain confidentiality at all times (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010). Each participant was given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. All personal identifying information was stored in a locked file cabinet separate from the assigned pseudonyms for 5 years, and all data will be securely disposed of afterwards.

Data Collection

Description

The data for this project study were collected through semistructured in-depth interviews and first-person observations. Qualitative interviews provided the most in-depth information from the participants using open-ended questions (Creswell, 2012). The open-ended interview allowed the participant to provide the most personal point of view and the most explanatory point of view and perception in his/her own words (Yin, 2003). Each participant was asked a list of specific interview questions (see Appendix B). The interview started with a short introduction

explaining the purpose of the study, an explanation of how data were going to be recorded, and the initial questions. The participants were all given a copy of the informed consent form, confidentiality statement, and protection from harm statement, and each participant was given the opportunity to ask questions.

Data collection occurred through individual face-to-face interviews and field observations. If the teacher was not available in person, then other options, such as videoconference, were considered. The interview consisted of seven open-ended questions. The focus of the questions revolved around the concepts of dealing with challenging behaviors, perception of support by administration, and overall perception of job satisfaction, and were planned to last up to 60 minutes. The items were chosen to focus on the perception of teacher satisfaction, dealing with challenging behaviors and how this can impact a teacher's perception of job satisfaction. Currently, there is no research that addresses dealing with challenging behavior in early childhood settings. Each question was developed to prompt teachers to think about what factors actually impact how they feel about their jobs. Using open-ended questions allowed me to ask more probing questions based on the answers provided. The questions supported the case study method because they allowed the teachers to freely discuss how they feel about the workplace, education, training, and experience, which explained how they reach perceived satisfaction.

I also conducted 5 hours of observations in the classrooms to get a snapshot view of what goes on in the classrooms. This gave me an opportunity to observe how the teachers interact with each other and their students. The observations provided data on individual behaviors and interactions between people (Merriam, 2009).

The observations were recorded on the observation form (Appendix D). The observation form was manually mapped out or coded as well to look for related themes to the interviews. The observation forms were stored with the interview notes in a locked file cabinet and will be available upon request for up to 5 years. The qualitative design allowed for the participant to share personal views, expressions, and thoughts. It is very useful when the sample is small, but much information is needed. In this study, the interview was chosen over a survey or questionnaire so that a direct look could be taken at views and perceptions as opposed to a continuum or estimate. The observation was paired with the interview so that information could be observed and discussed thoroughly to look for comparisons.

Each participant filled out a demographics form to record race, gender, education level, and experience in the field. The interview was taped, and the time of interview, date, name of participant, and questions asked were recorded in the interview protocol. I recorded raw data, had them transcribed by an outside company, coded them, and then stored them in a locked file cabinet where they will remain available upon request for 5 years. All processes were recorded in a researcher journal along with reflective notes after each interview.

All data were collected and transcribed after each interview. Upon completion of the interview transcription, a copy was returned to the participant to allow each teacher to validate his/her responses. Once the data were checked and corrected as necessary, the data were coded and evaluated for similarities and differences.

All hardcopy data were stored in a locked file cabinet. Electronic information was stored in password-protected files on a computer, and all demographic data were stored in a separate file with pseudonyms to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

Role of the Researcher

The current research topic was chosen because I have been an early childhood administrator for 12 years at six military installations and have witnessed the drop in quality of care as teachers struggle with job satisfaction. I am aware that there are many factors that impact the various ways that teachers feel about their jobs. It is important to understand how these factors can lead to a change in perceived satisfaction, and by what means teachers' interactions with the children can change. Taking a closer look at these factors may lead to preventing a drop in satisfaction or fostering a rise in satisfaction for administrators.

Since there was no prior relationship present between me and the participants, there were no conflicts of interest. Thus, the study was conducted in an objective environment. The lack of prior relationship made the interview more objective but may have affected the participants' willingness to open up. Starting with a discussion about confidentiality and privacy of the interview was accomplished to dissolve any resistance. This study was important to the field of early childhood education and the military community (Zellman et al., 2009). Therefore, this research may have an impact on analyzing how teachers perceive the work environment.

Data Analysis

The data were transcribed by Transcriptionpuppy Service and then manually coded after each interview. All of the data were analyzed after the final interview. Once the data were transcribed, they were segmented into categories and then inductively coded. The data were coded by category, context, and theme. Any cases that did not appear to relate to the topic of the study were reported as variances in the data. The goal of the study was to find commonalities

within the data, analyze or investigate the patterns, and then reflect on what data were collected

(True, Cendejas, Appiah, Guy, & Pacas, 2012).

Since this study used interviews and observations, the data were coded upon completion

of data collection. Once the data were separated into categories and context (depending on the

teachers' perceptions and answers), the data were evaluated for similarities, differences, patterns,

and themes. If other themes arose out of the data, as they were coded, then new codes were

formed and used for analysis. Any ideas or themes that arose from the data were recorded and

reported.

Data coding is often extensive. The data were read multiple times to ensure

understanding and to find similarities and themes. All discrepancies in the data were noted and

recorded. As the process continued, new themes came out of the data and other ideas were

discovered.

Accuracy and Credibility

Throughout the project study, care was taken to ensure that all data were collected and

analyzed with accuracy. All data were collected through face-to-face interviews with digital

recording and observations. During the interview, all questions were asked in a neutral manner

and followed up with probing questions to ensure accuracy and understanding. The data were

transcribed and reviewed by the participant as soon as possible after completion of the interview.

Each participant was asked to review the interview and check for accuracy of the data. Once the

data were analyzed, the participant was asked to review the analysis to ensure that his/her voice

was recorded correctly through member checking to ensure accuracy and credibility. All

discrepancies were noted and corrected. The data from the interview were triangulated with the

data from the observations to ensure validity and further strengthen credibility (Guion, Diehl, &

McDonald, 2011).

Results

Data Gathering

The data were collected through face-to-face interviews with each participant and short

observations of the participants in the workplace. The process was started by visiting each site

and meeting with the manager on site to introduce myself and explain the study. Up to this point,

I had only contacted the managers by email and they had been notified by the military

installation flight chief that I had authorization to conduct the study onsite. During the proposal

phase, the proposal had been sent through the military Human Research Protection Officer

(HRPO), which is similar to Walden's IRB process, but the actual site managers had not been

contacted, only informed that I was coming. To gain access to the participants, I contacted the

flight chief to request permission and completed the HRPO process. Once permission was

granted, I was permitted to approach each site and make individual arrangements with the

participants. I arrived at the site, met with management, dropped off the invitation to the study,

and established guidelines for interviews and observations.

Each manager stated that I was welcome to speak with the staff who volunteered for the

study, but at Site 1 the participants would have to make arrangements on their own time around

the work schedule. At Site 2, the manager allowed the participants to make time during the work

day for the interview on site. I left the invitation to the study with the manager to post and pass

out to the staff and then set up a time to return and conduct the interviews.

During the first visit to Site 2, the front office provided a list of volunteers that included where they were located in the building so that I could go to them and set up a time to meet them face-to-face. I returned on three separate days to finish the interviews with the Site 2 staff. Each interview started with an introduction, explanation of the study, and review of the informed consent form with each participant individually. I explained to each participant that the study was completely voluntary and that she had the right to withdraw at any time. Each participant was given a copy for her records. Each interview was scheduled for 30-60 minutes to allow each participant to explain in her own words how they felt about dealing with challenging behaviors, satisfaction with job choice, and overall job satisfaction. Each interview was digitally recorded so that it could be uploaded to Transcriptionpuppy.com. Once the transcripts were returned, I manually coded the data, looking for common themes, categories, and ideas. I reviewed the data for patterns and similarities between the participant's statements and feelings, by first looking for common themes of the interviews; then by placing those themes into categories.

During the interview, I asked the participants how each of them felt about working in a military child development center, what factors they felt had an influence on how they felt about working in the environment, and what types of things they saw as a supportive influence in the workplace. Each participant was asked the questions in Appendix B, with follow up questions based on the answers provided.

The observations were conducted about a month later in the classrooms that participants expressed dealing with challenging behaviors, needing support from management, feeling positive relationships with peers and coworkers, and feeling a strong sense of satisfaction in the workplace. Each observation lasted approximately 45 minutes and was recorded on the

observation tool (Appendix D). The observations were conducted to collect more data on the dynamics of the workplace and the relationships that participants take part in while working.

The data collection followed the planned procedures without major problems, although due to the guidelines provided at each site, there were no volunteers from Maxwell. The transcripts were hand carried to each site and returned to each participant to allow them to check for accuracy to ensure the data were reliable. The interviews did not take as long as predicted but the participants were given every opportunity to speak freely and to add any other information that they thought was relevant to her satisfaction in the workplace. The teachers made corrections to the transcripts and returned them through the mail service. One participant asked me not to use her data because she did not like that her transcript had "typos" in it.

Findings

The most common themes discussed were love of children, good training, strong support, and strong positive interpersonal relationships (see table 1). All of the participants stated that a "love for children" and "lots of good training" is what keeps them in the field. Ten participants mentioned the "support" they get from management as a factor in feeling positive about the job. Seven participants mentioned "feeling good about the relationships" that they have built in the workplace with families and coworkers. Participants also mentioned enjoying helping military families, the military environment, safety, and feeling valued, and having good resources. Some of the negative factors impacting the job satisfaction of the participants emerged as too many regulations, unsupportive administration, inconsistent policy implementation, and desire for more training. These factors have left the affected participants feeling "stressed and frustrated." Unsupportive administration was the most frequent negative factor in the workplace reported by

five participants. Although Taleb (2013) stated that there are two main factors that influence satisfaction, workplace conditions and personal related conditions, a small number of participants mentioned that personal issues often have an impact on how they feel when they come to work but they simply "push through to get the job done." On that same note, none of the participants stated that challenging behavior was a direct cause of dissatisfaction but does affect how they feel when dealing with them. Two participants stated that dealing with challenging behaviors has no impact on how they feel about their job because they have learned that it is the nature of the business and they have to push through and do their job in spite of what they are dealing with. Table 1 shows the frequency of positive factors that impact teachers' job satisfaction.

Table 1

Frequency of Positive Factors That Impact Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Positive factors	Frequency
Clean	1
Supportive mentor	1
Love job	10
Helping families	5
Military	5
Safety	4
Good resources	3
Nice facility	1
Training	11
Support	9
Routine and structure	1
Job security	3
Teamwork	3
Flexibility	2
Standards	1
Feeling of trust/ responsibility	1

Relationships	8
Making a difference	1
Experience and education a plus	6

As stated by Wagner et al. (2013), there is a gap in research of stress factors in the early childhood field, and they also stated the idea that teachers that feel in control and satisfied have less stress. This theory supports the general idea or theme from the interviews that while dealing with challenging behaviors is difficult and does affect how the participant feels about the job at the time that they are dealing with it, overall teachers understand that dealing with behaviors is part of the job. The bigger concern and larger frustration for teachers is perceived lack of support by management and keeping up with the ever-changing policies and procedures that go with working in a military child development program. Five participants stated that too much policy change and relationship issues with management are the main source of frustration. Participants stated that the most frustration comes from changes in policy, the amount of rules presented to follow, and the perceived amount of inconsistent support that management gives to certain individuals. Wagner et al. (2013) stated that this frustration stems from poor coping skills, exhaustion, and frustration. While Doherty, Lero, Goelman, LaGrange, and Tougas (2000) believed that the more training teachers get the more dissatisfied they are. The teachers at this site all spoke of getting lots of training and inconsistent support but still feeling both satisfied and dissatisfied with the job. Two participants stated that while they do feel frustrated with dealing with challenging behaviors it is only overwhelming when they also have inconsistent

support from management, while the other participants stated that they felt supported through dealing with behaviors.

The idea that employees can be satisfied with the work relationships that they experience and the bonds that they form with families, and simultaneously be dissatisfied with the perceived inconsistent support that they receive from management confirms characteristics with Herzberg's two factor theory of 1964 that satisfaction and dissatisfaction can exist at the same time. The participants' positive satisfaction seems to be influenced by what Herzberg (1966) referred to as motivators or intrinsic conditions; while the dissatisfaction is impacted by what he called hygiene factors, things that are extrinsic. Since the participants expressed a strong dissatisfaction with inconsistency of rules, fluctuations in support from administration, and a need for more training the staff may feel better if they had a basic orientation on professionalism, communication, internal customer service, and standard operating procedures.

During the observations, the teachers were observed working with the children in a positive manner and using positive communication to work with each other, which was consistent with the information gathered in the interviews. During the observations and interviews, teachers that demonstrated more autonomy and control definitely expressed more confidence, positive satisfaction, and overall well-being which was consistent with views expressed by Dagli (2012), Wagner et al. (2012), and Wagner and French (2009). According to Wagner and French (2009), freedom and autonomy are also the keys to motivating teachers to excel creatively in the workplace.

Overall, the caregivers at this site appeared to be well adjusted and comfortable with their work. While several of the caregivers mentioned negative factors surrounding the work

environment and overall experience like feeling pressured to teach, stressed out, and unfulfilled as shown in Table 2; they also showed traits of perseverance. Even as they expressed factors of dissatisfaction they also discussed the things that bind them together and provide a strong since of "community." The security and strength of the military community was mentioned by several participants and appeared to provide stability and strength where support was needed. Results of this study indicate that with the addition of some training in professionalism, internal customer service, ethics, and developmentally appropriate practices and an on-going developmental plan some of the perceived lack of support would be resolved. Many teachers feel unsupported due to the position that they hold in the organization and a lack of understanding of how rules and regulations are implemented and dispersed throughout the organization. If the staff had a better understanding of internal communication and a stronger sense of trust and teamwork, undoubtedly perception of support and satisfaction would rise.

Table 2

Frequency of Negative Factors Reported by Teachers

Negative Factors	Frequency
Poor stability	1
Lack of accountability	1
Too many rules	4
Admin not supportive	5
Inconsistent policy implementation	3
Coworker personalities	1
Need more training	3
Low pay	1
Degree not recognized or valued	1
Inconsistent appraisals/feedback	1
Experience different than expectation	1
Pressure to "teach"	1
Stressful environment	3
Frustrated	3
Too much to do	1
Low morale	1

Turnover	1
Too many changes	3

When dealing with challenging behaviors, it is unrealistic to expect teachers to just deal with behavior just because it is part of the job, but with some training, maybe they can feel competent and ready to embrace whatever behaviors come their way. The majority of the participants stated that they get "a lot" of training and they have a trainer on site as a resource if they need help but they still stated that support is not consistent. That encourages one to question what the real issue is. Or were Wagner et al. (2013) right when they said that the more you train a teacher the more dissatisfied they become? Many researchers have confirmed that staff training, meetings, and professional development are the key to building strong committed staff (Doherty et al, 2000; Wagner et al, 2013).

Conclusion

Section 2 of this project study provided a detailed explanation of the data analysis and procedures that were conducted during the research process. The participants were selected through a purposeful, criterion based, sampling procedure. The participant pool was made up of 11 lead and assistant teachers at a military installation in southern Alabama. The participants provided demographic data, which were stored but not attached to the interview to ensure confidentiality. The data were collected through qualitative interviews and observations; the interviews were transcribed, and checked for accuracy through member checking. Once the data were collected and transcribed they were coded and analyzed for similarities, discrepancies, themes, and ideas. Section 3 is a detailed description of the project, a training plan to support early childhood teachers while dealing with workplace challenges, specifically dealing with challenging behaviors of children.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In this project, I will focus on staff development and training with the goal of fostering a teacher who is more aware of the expectations in the early childhood environment, which will lead to a better prepared and more confident and efficient teacher. As explored in this study, teachers had mixed feelings about working in the military early childhood community. This is reflective of Herzberg's two factor theory and demonstrated that teachers can be overall satisfied with the job but still have areas that cause dissatisfaction in the workplace.

Goal

The goal of this project is to help teachers be more comfortable and to develop strategies for the workplace to ease discomfort and dissatisfaction to ensure a warm, positive, and nurturing environment for children. It would be optimal to influence a social change in the early childhood community to encourage teachers to feel more confident, comfortable, and satisfied in their jobs considering that financial compensation is not always an option.

The main objective of the project is to introduce a training plan that any early childhood program could use to

1. Raise awareness and build positive relationships and communication between staff and administration to address staff dissatisfaction with administrative support.

2. Provide techniques to encourage positive and consistent communication between administration, staff, and families to address inconsistent and constant changes that lead to lack of confidence in administration and confusion.

3. Provide information on dealing with challenging behaviors with a positive attitude–no teacher should just have to push through because they have no choice. The goal should be to work children through the special needs that they have and to feel good and confident about the resolution.

In this project, I focus on providing training resources that will foster understanding the roles in the organization and ideas and solutions for working through workplace issues to build stronger teams.

Rationale

A training resource was chosen as the project for this study for two important reasons. One, for longevity, it has a longer shelf life than a one-time training event; and it can be saved and referred back to as needed in the future. Second, when reviewing the data, there were many ideas touched on by the participants that only an in-depth guide seemed sufficient to cover a majority of the themes revealed by the participants. A guide or training resource gives the administration a tool to use with staff to ensure that all parties are getting a foundational overview of what they may encounter in the workplace that may impact how they feel about the job. Since communication, unmet expectations, and frustrations with behaviors and environmental issues seem to be the most common challenges, the goal is to help the teacher feel better prepared and confident so that he/she does not feel overwhelmed and leave the field before he/she gains a good understanding of the job expectations. The guide should also help those that are still in the field build better, stronger communication so that they may have a more positive experience as they continue in the field of Early Childhood.

Review of the Literature

Teacher satisfaction is at the very least a complex phenomenon, with the explanation of what impacts satisfaction ranging from feelings about children and families to perceived support from management and the inner satisfaction that comes from feeling valued and treasured. There is no simple explanation for how teachers evaluate how they feel about being teachers. With that in mind, in this study, I focused on how the teachers felt that they were impacted by children, families, training, and experiences in the workplace. Hoigaard, Giske, and Sundsli (2012) stated that a lack of autonomy, emotional demands, low social support, and lack of professional recognition all contribute to professional burnout and low satisfaction, which is consistent with the results from this study. Although Hoigaard et al. also included role ambiguity, work overload, student misbehavior, and lack of resources, the participants at this site stated that they were not concerns at all.

Each teacher's commitment appears to have a large impact on how much the other factors in the work place affect the overall satisfaction. According to Thomason and Paro (2013), teacher commitment to the field not only has a strong influence on the teacher-child interactions but it also leads to positive social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes for the children being served; therefore, these teachers are so committed that they overcome small dissatisfaction to be successful and create positive environments in spite of any dissatisfaction that they are feeling. The professional commitment to children that was seen in this study and others (Feeney, 2012; Thomason & Paro, 2013) is often viewed as an early childhood teacher characteristic.

Choi and Tang (2011) researched the existence of satisfied and dissatisfied commitment in teachers who stay in the workforce. This type of commitment is seen across the study, for

example, when a teacher is satisfied with the support that he/she gets from management but dissatisfied with the number of changes taking place in policies and procedures, but the teacher is committed to the position and the children. Choi and Tang questioned if this is commitment or just another type of professionalism. Professionalism plays a strong role in how satisfaction and dissatisfaction are impacted. As stated earlier, teachers who have been in the field longer and who are strongly trained and supported seem to feel more committed to pushing through the dissatisfaction.

A study of Headstart teachers, who by definition are also early childhood teachers, not only confirmed that there is limited research on the early childhood field (Bullough, Hall-Kenyon, & Mackay, 2012) but also revealed that the preschool environment has unique and specific challenges that impact teacher satisfaction and commitment. In the Bullough et al. (2012) study, the participants rated themselves high on the job satisfaction scale in all areas except pay. The majority of the participants stated that they were committed to the field due to a life event that made them care about the well being of children, but they had significant dissatisfaction related to pay. The glowing character trait of the teachers in this study was a "service ethic" or some might call sense of professionalism that was attributed to all of the participants.

The aim is definitely to avoid teacher burnout, which by definition is the loss of aim, interest, and caring of the teacher in the student's progress (Koruklu et al, 2012). Barnes (2013) discussed that the true essence of a good teacher is resiliency and further discussed that while many researchers recognize that dissatisfaction and burnout are a problem, teacher prep programs do not address preparing teachers for the mental load that teaching carries. Lloyd and

Sullivan (2012) conducted a study that focused on well-prepared teachers who still experienced teacher burnout and actually left the field due to excess administrative tasks. They found that even well-prepared teachers, who feel confident in their work, can feel overwhelmed with the tasks piled on them from administration and less satisfied with the actual teaching.

The idea that actual satisfaction with teaching and strong character of professionalism is further supported by Bissessar (2014), who stated that a teacher's psychological capital and collective self-esteem is the key to success, meaning a teacher's strong motivation and character leads them to persevering over what would pull down a less motivated teacher. Hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and resiliency are the keys to successful teachers in spite of the work place conditions (Bissessar, 2014). This could mean that hiring and training teachers based on character instead of just basic teaching ability may be the key to building a strong workforce.

The importance of finding teachers with strong character and fortitude was reaffirmed by Griffin (2010) when he studied teachers in the Bahamas who endured deplorable work conditions but persevered to continue to make a positive impact on the lives of children. Griffin stated that the teachers he worked with had a vast impact on the children they taught and teacher morale had a colossal impact on student learning. Berry and Gravelle (2013) also supported this idea that teacher satisfaction affects continuity of care and quality of education. In the study of rural community schools, they studied how the family-like atmosphere and strong teacher collaborations helped teachers feel more confident and be more successful to provide more positive student experiences, even though they were working with students with challenging behaviors and special needs.

Overall, the research demonstrated that teachers need to feel support to feel successful (Berry & Gravelle, 2013; Bullough et al., 2012; Choi &Tang, 2011), but teachers with strong self-efficacy and character will push through and provide quality outcomes and experiences for students regardless of the situation (Bissessar, 2014; Griffin, 2010; Thomason & La Paro, 2013). Finding research relevant to teacher satisfaction in the early childhood field has continued to be a problem. Each time early childhood teachers and satisfaction was used in the search term, the results did not produce any viable sources for research. In order to explore satisfaction of teachers, the term early childhood had to be modified to explore teachers of young children, and this still only produced a few articles. The articles that were found revolved around elementary school teachers. When articles were found regarding early childhood teachers, they focused more on best practices, quality, and character (Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012; Zellman et al., 2009). All attempts have been made to find credible and recent sources regarding early childhood teachers and military programs, I worked with Walden's librarian and used a variety of terms to increase the amount of journal articles used to support my research. An extensive and comprehensive search has revealed that the articles cited in this project are the most current and relevant to the topic.

Project Description and Implementation

The training guide that is presented here consists of mini modules that can be read and implemented by a trainer or manager in short training sessions over time or in a Super Saturday, whichever best suits the organization. Most trainers can modify the program to fit the needs of the individuals in the program who are attending the training. This training can be implemented

during an orientation week or over a period of months during nap time or short lunch and learn sessions. This provides flexibility to the program to avoid financial hardship and staffing issues.

Potential Barriers

Finding the resources of a professional development plan in the early childhood field is always a challenge. Finding the time to get teachers out of the classroom is probably the largest obstacle, so administration must be prepared to do some creative scheduling or be willing to incur some overtime or weekend work. This is definitely one of the unpleasant detriments to being successful in this field. Professional development is a staple to success in this field (NAEYC, 2008), but "decade after decade, our nation's leaders have chosen not to provide a remedy to help struggling parents, their employers and the next generation of American workers" (Zigler, Marsland, & Lord, 2009, p. 154) to find a solution to the problems in the early childhood field. This is why individual organizations have to invest in supporting the quality of care that they provide and the quality of training and development that is given to their teachers.

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Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

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The most efficient and comprehensive training plan would consist of scheduling small cohorts to come together during nap time to review the training material and work with other teachers working with the same aged children to discuss issues and solutions in a constructive manner. The trainings would be set for 12:00 to 2:00 PM on a weekly basis so that the teachers would have an opportunity to eat and learn the materials before returning to the classroom. The training sessions would be presented in a proposed format similar to the one below.

Proposed Training Plan

Topics

Role of Lead Caregiver (Feb)

Developmentally Appropriate Practices (Feb)

Learning through play (Mar)

Positive Guidance (Mar)

Health and Sanitation (Apr)

Portfolios (Apr)

Minimum Standards (May)

Accreditation standards (May)

Lunch and Learns

Mondays – Infant teachers

Tuesdays- Toddler teachers

Wednesdays – Preschool teachers

Thursdays – part time teachers

Fridays – make up session

<div align="center">Objectives</div>

Role of the Caregiver

Define intentional teaching

Understanding classroom supervision

Define communicating as a team

Developmentally appropriate practices

Define developmentally appropriate practices

Understand setting age appropriate boundaries

Learning through Play

      Discuss using your environment to engage children

      Demonstrate knowledge of culturally appropriate expectations

      Explore sensory activities

Positive Guidance

      Understand guidance styles

      Explore behavior management techniques

      Understand using positive language to guide behavior

      Understand age appropriate expectations

Health and Sanitation

      Understand proper hand washing and glove use

      Define sanitation guidelines

      Understand how to administer medicine appropriately

Portfolios

      Define and understand the contents

      Discuss best practices to getting work samples, pictures, and anecdotal notes

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others

It is the role of all parties involved to take personal responsibility for being the best and putting forth the due diligence necessary to succeed in this field. The trainer has to make a commitment to stay current on the latest trends in early childhood and to present the changes as they arise to teachers so that they can continue to provide the best quality care possible for the children.

Teachers have to be honest with themselves about skills and abilities and they have to be willing to self-evaluate to grow. A significant part of growing as a teacher is having the ability to look at one's own skills and measure them for effectiveness. Once teachers are able to do this, they can start to change behavior based on how well their teaching methods and approaches are implemented, and they can be an active part of change, development, and growth.

In the early childhood field, parents also play an important role in development, teaching, and success. Parents are the first and strongest influence on young children and with the help of the early childhood provider, this bond continues to grow and develop as the child gets older. Building a strong bridge between home and school helps children and teachers feel more confident in the school environment so keeping parents informed about teachers' education and professional development is an added bonus to fostering a strong relationship.

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Implications Including Social Change

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Local Community

In military programs where children often spend 10-12 hours a day with their early childhood teacher, it seems important that this person be of the highest regard? Military providers deal with challenging behaviors, educational milestones, emotional concerns, and general growth and development every day. Ensuring that each teacher has an ongoing training resource available that can provide support and ideas can only help him or her continue to be stronger advocates and supporters for the children he or she serves.

This study has implications for practice that will lead to positive social change in the early childhood field. To find that teachers are dedicated and committed to the military community and their families and that they love working in early childhood centers, but often

feel unsupported and choose to just deal with it or leave the profession is discouraging. Therefore, discovering that the perceived lack of support may be from lack of understanding and training provides some inspiration to encourage social change in this area. With the amount of teacher burnout and dissatisfaction present in this field, anything that can be done to promote a more positive environment that will in turn encourage teachers to feel empowered, valued, optimistic, and encouraged to prosper and become better stronger teachers leading to positive social change is definitely worth the task.

Far Reaching

In a broad spectrum, this type of project could have major ramifications, as stated by Zigler et al. (2009),

If every child is a national resource, then every child's welfare is a national responsibility. Unless we make an effort to insure that all children have an opportunity to grow and develop as they should, we will be shortchanging not only the children but our nation's future. (p. 154)

Parents are a child's first teacher and early childhood teachers appear to be a close second. Ensuring that early childhood teachers are the best, brightest, most talented, and most satisfied will ensure that they are also implementing the most developmentally appropriate, challenging, and stimulating activities for children; which in turn, will stimulate the children's mind from the very beginning of their educational experience.

Conclusion

Section 3, is based on the project which is a training program and manual to help early childhood teachers become more confident, comfortable, and satisfied in their profession. The

manual breaks down some basic foundational concepts that the teachers that participated in this study mentioned to be areas of concern and uncertainty. The manual also covers the topic areas that will reinforce the basic professional development areas that help to promote a more positive work environment like positive communication, professionalism, and developmentally appropriate practices.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

One of the biggest limitations of early childhood programs is the lack of consistency of care (Zigler et al, 2009). Early childhood program standards and requirements differ from state to state and so do the training and development standards for teachers. The strength of military programs is that they all have access to a standard foundational level training program. Unfortunately, the program is not always implemented consistently and thoroughly to ensure that all staff feel competent and supported.

Since training and support rated the highest among the reasons for strong satisfaction among the participants, finding a way to implement an ongoing training plan that addresses continuing needs of the teachers could fill both of these essentials. A portable training guide is easy to move from site to site, easy to use, and convenient to implement. Since every program has at least two administrators, responsibility of implementation can be shared between the management team and any seasoned teachers who may be ready for more responsibility and growth. This empowers the teachers to take part in growing a stronger team and allows the manager to see the team grow.

Alternate Approaches

While there was a good amount of information uncovered in this study, and a solid training project was developed that will most likely come in handy, in the future, it would be helpful to use a mixed method approach with a Likert type survey, interviews, and focus groups. This would allow for more information to be gathered and would give participants who were not comfortable with talking to a stranger a chance to provide more candid opinions.

Several teachers voiced concern over how they feel about staff to management relationships rather than dealing with the challenging behaviors; therefore, with this group, that may have been an area for more development. This is what prompted the chapter on professionalism and communication. Many of the staff seemed reluctant to participate without compensation. Since this field is often at the lower end of the salary field, any time teachers are asked to do more work above and beyond the daily responsibilities, it becomes clear who has passion and character for the profession. This does not change the fact that the other teachers are still in the profession; thus, it would be beneficial to add incentive to gain more participation in order to get a more eclectic group of participants.

Scholarship and Project Development and Leadership and Change

There is limited specific information on how early childhood teachers feel or think about the job, the children, or the lifestyle of their programs. There is a great deal of information on quality or lack thereof in the field of early childhood education. Numerous articles can be found on how the early childhood field struggles or how the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971, the Child Care Reform act, the Military Child Care Act, and the No Child Left Behind Act did not live up to their potential. However, when searching for simple articles on how early childhood teachers feel about their work, the children, training, struggles, or even compensation, the search engines are blank.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

I learned a lot about my organizational skills and my people skills, and I gained a new insight for where my future passion lies within this field. During the development of this project, I felt confident about doing the actual project and analyzing the data. I looked forward to

collecting the data but felt a little leery about coding and analyzing what I collected. Once I was in the field, I found that I was not really comfortable with the collection part, but the coding, analyzing, and then developing the training for the project felt more natural. While my mentors have often told me that training should be my field, I have often stayed away from the limelight, but during this process of developing this project, I found that writing training and researching resources for staff felt good and very rewarding. I felt very confident that I was making positive changes and supporting my teachers to become better practitioners, which in turn will provide better quality care for all children.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

When I fell into early childhood care, it was more of an accident due to the circumstances I was in, but I quickly saw the benefits of what the program was doing for children. This prompted me to further my education and learn more so that I could be a better educator and provider to the children whom I served. During this project as I spoke with young and seasoned teachers, I repeatedly heard how much they love children and want to see them grow and prosper, but I also heard how fulfilling it is to build relationships with the families and provide support to families as they struggle with the growth and development milestones of their children. It goes without saying that children are important and treasured, but there is no manual for raising them. There is no book to guide one with all the answers, and that is why early childhood programs are so important. Early childhood programs provide a foundation of support to children and families, they provide social and emotional resources for families, and they provide basic security and safe environments for families so that parents can feel confident about entering the workforce.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

Developing a project has been an enlightening experience. Developing and implementing early childhood tools and resources appears to come naturally to me due to my interest and investment in the field. I have been working in the field for so long that many of the ideas and concepts spring to mind automatically when teachers and parents approach me regarding issues and concerns with the children; therefore, developing this project allowed me to explore a topic that I thoroughly enjoy and allowed me the opportunity to produce a product to benefit my field. The only fault I can see and I am consciously aware of is that I tend to focus wholeheartedly on the child, and I look at each situation from the child's perspective. This makes me a good teacher and trainer but can put a barrier between me and the teachers that I work with. I have to be careful when developing and implementing my projects to ensure that I meet the needs of the teacher and the children.

The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change

The implications for positive social change include increased perceived job satisfaction for early childhood teachers that will lead to more positive learning environments for children, less teacher burnout and turnover, and higher quality learning environments.

Implications

The results of this study provided some insight into how the teachers feel about the job they do. In Alabama, many teachers work 8-hour shifts without breaks away from the children. They eat and plan in the classroom with the children who they serve, so it takes a great deal of passion, fortitude, and commitment from a teacher to rise above the obstacles that cause dissatisfaction in the workplace. While I entered into this project thinking that education and

training would be major factors in how teachers feel about the workplace, I learned that character is the most important aspect of teacher success. Training and education have an impact, but all of the mentioned factors come in behind the personal character of the teacher. This is important when hiring managers, and when administrators are trying to fill positions. When entering the hiring process, recruiters can formulate questions to interview for character instead of task oriented skills. While education and background is important in the field, the research shows that teachers burn out even after they finish their education. Strong character is part of who they are, so this should give them the fortitude to persevere.

Future Research

For future research, it would be beneficial to take more time to do an in depth study with a large sample across profit and nonprofit, private and public early childhood programs to get some strong feedback from teachers working directly with children and families to discover what makes them feel good and bad about coming to work each day. The goal is to build teacher satisfaction and decrease dissatisfaction to retain teachers in the field. In this organization, the teachers had a great deal of satisfaction with the program, community they worked in, and the love of children, but they simultaneously felt discontent with administration and policy. This phenomenon of satisfaction and dissatisfaction appears to be repetitive throughout the field (Berry & Gravelle, 2013; Bredekamp, 2014; Hoigaard et al., 2012). In this study, teachers exhibited a breakdown in communication that impacted the job satisfaction that the staff had with administration. The lack of communication also did not foster a positive and professional working environment, which further impacted the feeling of positive job satisfaction. Therefore, developing and implementing a tool that will build communication, promote professionalism,

and lay a foundation of positive teaching principles will lead to improved job satisfaction and nurture a positive social change. Educating early childhood teachers on their strengths and building action plans for improvement as a team will only lead to a stronger workforce (Bruno, 2012). As long as the teachers feel educated and empowered to change their environment for the better, it is their character that maintains our education system and continues to encourage our children to persevere.

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Appendix A: A Training Guide to Dealing with Challenging Behaviors

Contents

Chapter I   Professionalism

Chapter II   Developmentally Appropriate
                                             Practice

Chapter III   Challenging Behavior

Chapter IV   Using your Environment

Chapter V   Pulling it all Together

I Professionalism

Professionalism is one of the most difficult concepts to teach to early childhood teachers. Not only is the concept of what a professional looks like unclear but as you change from one program to the next, the current definition may change. In the field of early childhood education, you have for profit, non-profit, licensed, license–exempt, private, public, corporate and military programs and they all have their own definition of what it means to be professional. First a definition of what an early childhood professional looks like in an accredited program is provided. In order to meet the standards developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), teachers need to meet minimum standards of education and professional development. Teachers should have a minimum of an associate's degree or equivalent and be working toward a bachelor's degree in a relevant field. This is not to say that all teachers must have an education to be good at the job, it simply implies that teachers that are committed to improving education for children should also be committed to improving education for themselves. Even after a teacher has completed formal education, ongoing professional development is required to maintain a solid understanding of changing trends in the field.

Professionalism is not just about education. It is a state of mind. Simple things like the way you carry yourself when you come to work, the way you dress, preparedness, timeliness, commitment, and communication with families. All of these things come together to present you, as a professional, in the workplace. Parents and stakeholders have to view early childhood teachers as professionals for the field to continue to gain credibility and an overall sense of professionalism.

When you come to work each day with a positive attitude, prepared with a developmentally appropriate lesson plan, ready to have positive communication with children, families, and peers you are ready to facilitate a professional environment. Well- developed lessons include the use of a research-based curriculum that is based on the individual needs of the children. In addition, the activities provided meet children at their developmental age and stage of development. In order for teachers to provide lessons of this caliber they must be prepared to observe and document development of the children on an ongoing basis, build strong communication with parents, and be willing to seek out developmental resources as needed to provide activities for the children. Parent communication includes daily informal conversation, newsletters, emails, and even formal conferences - all of these things contribute to making the job of an early childhood teacher a profession.

<Professionalism Presentation>
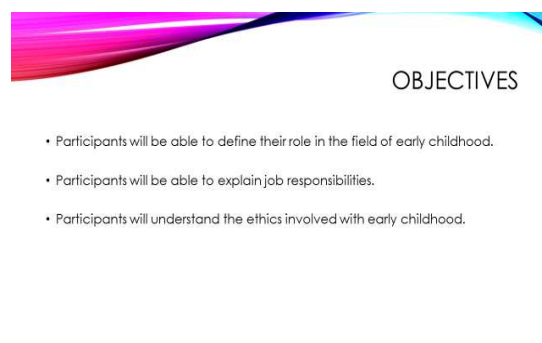
What makes a good teacher?

- Is a good teacher born great or trained to be great?

- Think about the things you find appealing about your quality teachers and how they benefit the children that you work with?

ROAD TO PROFESSIONALISM

- Accepting early childhood education as a profession is an on going quandary.

- Piaget, Erikson, and Dewey are just a few of the earliest theorist to support learning through play which is the foundation for the profession of early childhood.

- Teachers from non profits to for profits, public and private, corporate, military, and religious all have to come to the same consensus of what is important in the field in order for the profession to gain credibility.

WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD?

- The practice of teaching young children birth to age 8.

- Infant toddler education further breaks that care down to working with children birth to age 2.

- Key concepts include: learning through play, socio-cultural learning theory, constructivist theory, and experiential learning theory.

ROAD TO PROFESSIONALISM

- Since the establishment of the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and other organizations like the Council for Professional Recognition, the Child development field continues to gain momentum and importance across the nation.

- Implementation of the Child Development Associate (CDA) Program, Quality Rating Systems (QRIS), and accreditation processes across the nation have also urged programs to take a closer look at improving quality of staff, programming, policy and procedures, and overall implementation of care.

- So what is the teachers role in all of this?

TEACHER'S ROLE

- Know your job description and responsibilities.

- Maintain professional development and growth to become a better teacher.

- Be professional at all times.

- Do your best for the children at all times.

JOB DESCRIPTION AND DUTIES

- Make sure to ask for your job description as soon as you start your job.

- Keep a copy and refer back to it, whenever you are not sure of your duties.

- Remember, a large part of early childhood is *CARING* for children, your job description may not describe this in full.

- *Always*, remember to take care of yourself.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Early childhood trends and best practices are ever changing.

- A good caregiver/teacher needs to stay abreast of these changes and be flexible enough to modify as needed.

- Maintaining a foundation of knowledge and meeting children where they are developmentally is the best practice that you can master.

BE PROFESSIONAL

- Ethical code of conduct – NAEYC

- Being professional is more than just coming to work every day.

- Respect, communication, positive relationships, strong work ethic, moral and ethical behavior, and professional responsibility all play a part in being a good professional.

  - Test your knowledge?

PROFESSIONALISM IN ECE

- Donna Blackburn, ABD
- 1113 15th St. S
- Birmingham, AL 35243
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II Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Developmentally appropriate practices are a concept that is used to explain how one engages children in appropriate activities in early childhood programs. Since the mid-1980s early childhood professionals have been trying to define how they can provide consistent care across the programs that looks similar and provide the same quality of care to children. The NAEYC developed a system to help with the process of formalizing a system that they call accreditation, which is based on developmentally appropriate practices and care.

Early childhood providers took what they knew from research, theory, and practice and transformed it into activities and approaches to working with children. The goal is to develop ideas and concepts for teachers to implement with children that meet them where they are developmentally at each age and stage that they go through from birth to eight years old. The key is to use developmental checklists, observation tools, developmental milestones, or any other tool that the teacher is comfortable with to decide where the children that they are working with fall on the developmental continuum and then develop the lesson plan and activities to challenge them.

This looks like activities that not only allow them to use the skills that they have but also encourages them to try new skills or grow and improve skills that they are still struggling with. This is where one would benefit from using anecdotal notes. Anecdotal notes are little notes that you, as the teacher, or your aid take during the day to record what your children are doing. They do not have to be extravagant or formal. They just need to be long enough to capture the moment or what is going on, and significant to document what developmental milestone the child is working on or mastering. These notes help you when you are planning. They provide a guide to what you should be putting into your plan to challenge your children, what you may need to take

out of your lesson because your children may not be ready, or what you may what to add to lead you to a new domain.

The key is to remember that you want to challenge children to reach obtainable goals. In order to do this, you need to be aware of what is obtainable for each child and you need to plan accordingly. The whole process of finding out what the goals are and planning accordingly is all part of developmentally appropriate practice, also called DAP.

In accredited programs, DAP looks like hands on learning. That means the classrooms are set up in small child-centered learning centers with safe, challenging materials to explore at their own pace. The classroom should have a schedule set up with a good balance of quiet and active activities. The schedule should be at the children's eye level with pictures to show them the sequence of when things are coming. The activities and supplies should be non-toxic and child friendly, on open shelves at the child's level so the items can be reached at any time; then comes the adult child interactions.

Adult-child interactions can be one of the most difficult parts of the profession but also one of the most rewarding. Developmentally appropriate practice is a set of guidelines that help teachers make good decisions about how to interact with children, set up the classroom, and implement teaching strategies. How you, the teacher, interacts with the children throughout the day and even the year can make a difference as to whether each child emerges from your program feeling strong, confident, and ready to conquer the next task or timid, unsure, and looking to see who will carry them through the next task. The goal as early childhood professionals is to provide stimulating, engaging, and thought provoking activities to children so that they can grow to become strong self-thinkers that may someday lead.

Developmentally appropriate practice means that there are an unspecified number of possibilities out there for teachers to work with children. Strong accredited and appropriate programs have a routine and structure that is flexible and strong, are inclusive of all children, have families that are willing and able to try, and are open to any child and family that is interested and eager to learn through play. Learning through play is the academics of an early childhood classroom and a good teacher is flexible enough to recognize the differences in his/her children and modify the program to meet the individual needs of the children he/she is working with.

<DAP Presentation>

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES
January 2016

OBJECTIVES

- Participants will be able to define developmentally appropriate practice.
- Participants will be able to discuss the basic messages behind developmentally appropriate practice.
- Identify some methods to implement developmentally appropriate practices.

WHAT IS DAP?

- What does it mean to you?
- What does it look like in the classroom?
- What are the core considerations of DAP?
- What does NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) have to do with Dap?

DAP

- Developmentally appropriate practices are different in every classroom because they are based off the needs of the children that you are working with.


DAP

- Developmentally appropriate practices are different in every classroom because they are based off the needs of the children that you are working with.
- DAP activities are often child initiated.
  - The teacher can introduce materials and let the child explore them – intentional teaching.
  - The child can introduce ideas and themes they came across at home – sharing the theme with the whole class.
  - Children often take teacher provided materials and use them for entirely different ideas.

DAP

- DAP – Developmentally appropriate practice is meeting a child where they are and making the experience extraordinary through hands on learning.
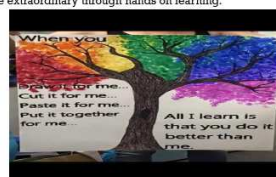
DAP IS...

- Learning through hands on activities.

- Child initiated, process oriented, activities and art projects.

- Intentional teaching that focuses on learning through investigation, play, and inquiry produce the most value to young children.

THE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CLASSROOM

- Child friendly
- Child sized
- Organized
- Safe
- Interesting
- Warm
- Encouraging

CORE CONSIDERATIONS

- What and how children learn is dependent on the social and cultural context from which they come from.

- Teachers must build a solid knowledge of child development.
- Learn and recognize individual differences among the children they work with.
- Understand the cultural and social contexts in which each child lives.

NAEYC

- The National Association for the Education of Young Children in the most recognized accreditation of the early childhood community.

- It is held with the highest regard and considered a sign of quality and dedication to delivering developmentally appropriate care to children aged birth to kindergarten.

- NAEYC does not mandate how to implement programming, they simply make recommendations and suggestions and give information on the best practices in the field.
- NAEYC does have a position statement on DAP and early learning standards that you can retrieve at naeyc.org

LET'S PRACTICE...

- Review the scenarios and discuss with your table whether you think the activity is developmentally appropriate for your program.

- Remember DAP can be relative to the program you are working in and the management style that you work under, refer to your curriculum guide.

III Behavior

Dealing with challenging behaviors is definitely a challenge that every teacher faces at some time during his/her career. Whether it be an insatiable infant that cries inconsolably throughout the day or a preschooler that hits, kicks, and spits when you want them to sit down and listen to a story with the class, these behaviors become a part of every teacher's routine and only the most dedicated and prepared teachers persevere through the stress that comes with facing these behaviors on a regular basis. This chapter will focus on how understanding the difference between guidance and punishment and recognizing your own communication and discipline style can lead to your continued success.

First let us take a look at the difference between guidance and punishment. Guidance is the process of teaching a child how to make a better choice. Essentially, the goal is to get the child to change his or her behavior by redirecting him/her to a more desired outcome. This may consist of the teacher offering a number of other appealing choices or the teacher may have to intervene and provide an alternative to the behavior or choice that the child is currently engaged in; either way, the choice is left up to the child and the teacher simply guides them to make the right one. Guidance is geared to lead the child to a feeling of confidence, positive communication, the skill of conflict resolution, and eventually the ability to self -regulate behavior.

Punishment, on the other hand, is more absolute. The teacher intervenes, provides the solution, and the child must follow the directions given or incur consequences. This route does not let the child make his or her own choice and does not give the child the opportunity to think, grow, or express ideas. Punishment often leaves the child feeling shame, guilt, fear, and results in

tears. The punished child never builds the confidence to implement conflict resolution or problem solving skills and may never be able to self- regulate behavior.

A big part of understanding whether you deliver punishment or guidance is understanding where you come from and what seems normal to you. You really have to consider whether you come from a family that communicates well and talks things through or a family that yells, shames, and demeans each other for mistakes, or a family where anything goes. It is really important to recognize how you feel about what the children in your care do and it is equally important to be able to separate your personal feelings from what is developmentally appropriate according to the best practices in the early childhood field. There is no magic book that says what is right or wrong, but there are minimum standards in most states that forbid corporal punishment and the best practices in early childhood encourage positive redirection and guidance. This field is full of teachers from various backgrounds, cultures, experiences, and educations, which makes this field amazing. Teachers have an amazing gift of diversity, love, and experiences, to offer children and it starts with developmentally appropriate activities and experiences.

Types of Guidance

Guidance generally comes in three forms – authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. While all three may believe that they have the best interests of the child at heart, they each have distinct factors that make them significantly different in their approach to rearing children.

The authoritarian is rule oriented and extremely structured. This teacher has a specific plan or idea in place and does not flex or change. As a teacher this approach is difficult, especially when a lesson has been planned and rolled out and the children are not interested. If

the teacher is not capable of changing the lesson or moving onto the next idea, then challenging behaviors often come into play and lead to power struggles and disruptive classroom struggles that get out of hand.

The authoritative is rule oriented but flexible to individual needs and desires. This type of teacher builds a lesson and follows all plans and expectations but does not have a problem with changing the lesson based on the individual needs of the children or the co teachers. This approach often makes the classroom flow more smoothly and it is conducive to working in a teaching team environment. Programs that support authoritative teachers usually have strong networking and teaching team environments.

The permissive teacher is very flexible, sometimes to a fault. A permissive teacher allows the child to control the decisions and the flow of the classroom without any real boundaries, often resulting in general chaos. Since young children often seek boundaries to define themselves, lack of boundaries leads them to keep pushing sometimes until injury occurs.

The optimal goal is to recognize where you come from, how you were raised, what feels right to you, and develop a strong confident mixture between these types of guidance to produce the strongest, most positive learning environment possible. A quality classroom looks different in each program but the consistent things are warm, nurturing, competent teachers that are willing to meet children where they are developmentally to ensure their prime success. The benefits of teaching children in a program that practices positive guidance is that the children learn self-regulation and positive self-esteem. They also experience and learn to make positive interpersonal relationships, independence, and they learn logical and natural consequences through the natural choices that you have offered.

Positive Progressive Guidance

Progressive guidance has six basic principles: Individual management, ignoring behavior, redirection and distraction, verbal intervention, logical consequences, and take a break. Progressive guidance requires teachers and parents to work closely together and to build a partnership that supports each other and provides consistency for the child. If you do a good job with individual management, you may never have to take a break with a child.

Individual Management

Individual management consists of supervision, activity, special needs, modeling, developmentally appropriate practice, and reinforcement. Individual management requires you to model appropriate behaviors to your children, make sure you identify and become familiar with any special needs that they may have, keep them engaged in developmentally appropriate activities, maintain adequate supervision at all times, and reinforce appropriate behavior with meaningful praise. Ensuring that you have developmentally appropriate expectations is a large part of managing individual needs.

Supervision requirements suggest that you keep your ratio as low as your staffing and budget limitations allow. This means that the younger the children that you work with the lower your staff to child ratio should be. For example, infants might be one adult per four children while preschoolers would be one adult per 10 children. This allows for the children that need the most supervision and that have the least amount of self-help skills to have more adult supervision.

Activity and developmentally appropriate practices are closely related and refer to the process of keeping the children engaged at all times in activities that are developed based on

their individual ages and abilities. Teachers have to be able to recognize when children are actively and appropriately engaged and be prepared to modify activities accordingly based on how the children are responding to the stimulation in the environment.

Since children in early childhood environments spend a large portion of the day with the teacher, how teachers model interpersonal relationships and interactions in the environment is a very important part of guiding young children. Children learn not only through the things that you tell them but also through the things that they see, feel, touch, and hear throughout the day. So when they see you as a model in the classroom and watch you interact with your co teacher, with parents, and other families they are learning how to relate to the world.

Awareness of special needs will make a vast difference toward your success in reaching out to any child that you are struggling with in your program. Working together cooperatively with parents will ensure that they are aware when a child needs intervention. Using resources that are readily available in the community or encouraging them to share diagnosis that they already have will definitely benefit you and make the child's experience smoother so that he or she can focus on the educational aspects of the day.

Finally, once you have all of these components of individual management under control remember to follow them up with some positive reinforcement of the appropriate behaviors that you are seeing. Children are eager to please the adults in their lives, and while teachers want them to learn to do the right thing just because; for a time, they are doing it to hear you say "you made a good choice" so do not forget to remind them how good the choice was and how proud they should be.

Ignoring Behavior

As difficult as it may be, ignoring unpleasant behavior can be a powerful tool. If the behavior is not harmful to the child or others, it may be more beneficial to just ignore the behavior all together. This lets the children know that they do not have to continue the behavior to get attention and it avoids giving negative reinforcement as a reward for unwanted behaviors. Often the simple act of ignoring a behavior will result in a cease of the behavior altogether.

It is important to remember that some behaviors that irritate us are not necessarily "challenging behaviors," we just do not like them. For example, a child moving around and squirming in circle time is just annoying and may be a sign that he/she is bored and not engaged, this does not mean that the behavior is challenging or needs discipline.

Redirection and Distraction

Redirection and distraction can be a little more challenging. The key to redirection is giving children alternatives that you want them to do, that also seem appealing to them. Children often just want to feel like they have some control over the choices being made. Some children begin asserting their independence during their first year of development and by the time they turn two it is very clear who is trying to take control. As the adult/teacher you have to help them by giving clear, safe choices in an engaging and appropriate environment to ensure that each child learns to make successful choices and gains positive self-image. It is key to remember that the child should control how long redirection lasts, once he/she gains control it is okay to return to the previous activity.

Verbal Intervention

Verbal intervention becomes more complex as children get older. As you begin to help them build language skills to develop reciprocal conversations, active listening, empathy,

problem solving skills, and positive communication. As the teacher, explain why you are intervening and why the behavior is inappropriate. Try to put feelings and consequences to the action that you are asking the child to stop, and give logical consequences. Make sure that the teacher action relates to the behavior at hand. Cause and effect is a child's natural language.

Take a Break

Take a break is mentioned last because with careful planning and implementation of the previously mentioned tools you should rarely reach this step. When a child totally loses control and is in danger of hurting someone "take a break." This is not a time out. The child should not be left unattended or denied activities or human contact. This just gives them the opportunity to step back from whatever is upsetting them or over stimulating them so that they can calm down. You may need to sit and talk with them, play a quiet game with them, hold them, or sing them a song to remind them that life is okay. This usually only applies for children over 18 months, with children less verbal you should use redirection. Multiple breaks in one day usually means you need a parent conference and an action plan to meet the needs of this child, there is something going on. Observations and assessments will help you map out a plan of action when you meet with the family.

Progressive guidance is a tool to successfully deal with challenging behaviors in your classroom. Each teacher has to tailor the steps to meet the needs of each individual class he or she has each year. They key to implementing the plan with success is to Relate to the behavior, be Respectful to the child as a human, and be Reasonable. The three Rs will see you through every time.

<Guidance Presentation>

Dealing with Challenging Behaviors

PROGRAM MANAGER, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA, BIRMINGHAM

OBJECTIVES

- Identify the difference between guidance and punishment.
- Discuss communication styles.
- Explore positive progressive guidance.
- Identify the factors that impact guidance and discipline.

GUIDANCE VS. PUNISHMENT

Guidance	Punishment
Communication	Shame
Confidence	Guilt
Conflict Resolution	Fear
Self Regulation	Tears
Behavior Modification	Behavior Modification

UNDERSTANDING WHERE WE COME FROM???

TYPES OF GUIDANCE

- Authoritarian – rule oriented and super structured.

- Authoritative –rule oriented but flexible to individual needs and desires.

- Permissive – very flexible to the desires of the child. Lacks boundaries and often results in general chaos.

BENEFITS OF POSITIVE GUIDANCE

- A. Self regulation

BENEFITS OF POSITIVE GUIDANCE

A. Self – regulation

B. Positive Self Esteem

BENEFITS OF POSITIVE GUIDANCE

A. Self – regulation

B. Positive Self Esteem

C. Positive Interpersonal relationships

BENEFITS OF POSITIVE GUIDANCE

A. Self – regulation

B. Positive Self Esteem

C. Positive Interpersonal relationships

D. Independence

BENEFITS OF POSITIVE GUIDANCE

A. Self – regulation

B. Positive Self Esteem

C. Positive Interpersonal relationships

D. Independence

E. Learning logical and natural consequences

BUILDING POSITIVE SELF IMAGE

❖ Patience

❖ Active listening

❖ Empathy

❖ Proactive awareness

❖ Developmentally Appropriate Expectations

POSITIVE PROGRESSIVE GUIDANCE

❖ Provides a tool for teachers to use to respond to behavior.

❖ Helps teachers to maximize the environment for all children.

❖ Has 6 basic principles

You can **influence** your child, but you can't **control** him.

POSITIVE PROGRESSIVE GUIDANCE

- Progressive Guidance relies on effective parent communication and teacher confidence.

POSITIVE PROGRESSIVE GUIDANCE

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND…

➢Do not subject a child to the use of corporal punishment.

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➢Do not subject a child to emotional abuse.

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➢Do not subject a child to emotional abuse.
➢Do not use negative comments about the child's race, gender and/or disability.
➢Do not withhold food, light, warmth, clothing or medical care as punishment for inappropriate behavior.
➢Do not use physical restraint other than to physically hold a child when containment is necessary to protect a child or others from harm.

Slide 1:

· Staff demonstrates appropriate behavior.

INDIVIDUAL MANAGEMENT

· Modeling

Slide 2:

· Staff demonstrates appropriate behavior.

· Staff become familiar with each child's special needs.
· Develop techniques necessary to work with that child.

INDIVIDUAL MANAGEMENT

· Modeling

· Special Needs/Individualizatio n

Slide 3:

· Staff demonstrates appropriate behavior.

· Staff become familiar with each child's special needs.
· Develop techniques necessary to work with that child.

· Bored children get into trouble.
· Provide children with interesting, challenging, and appropriate things to do and the materials to do them with.

INDIVIDUAL MANAGEMENT

· Modeling

· Special Needs/Individualization

· Activity

Slide 4:

· Staff demonstrates appropriate behavior.

· Staff become familiar with each child's special needs.
· Develop techniques necessary to work with that child.

· Bored children get into trouble.
· Provide children with interesting, challenging, and appropriate things to do and the materials to do them with.

· Maintain staff to child ratios
· Supervise children at all times.

INDIVIDUAL MANAGEMENT

· Modeling

· Special Needs/Individualization

· Activity

· Supervision

Slide 5:

· Staff demonstrates appropriate behavior.

· Staff become familiar with each child's special needs.
· Develop techniques necessary to work with that child.

· Bored children get into trouble.
· Provide children with interesting, challenging, and appropriate things to do and the materials to do them with.

· Maintain staff to child ratios
· Supervise children at all times.

· Reinforce each child's appropriate behavior

INDIVIDUAL MANAGEMENT

· Modeling
· Special Needs/Individualization
· Activity
· Supervision
· Reinforcement

Slide 6:

· Staff demonstrates appropriate behavior.

· Staff become familiar with each child's special needs.
· Develop techniques necessary to work with that child.

· Bored children get into trouble.
· Provide children with interesting, challenging, and appropriate things to do and the materials to do them with.

· Maintain staff to child ratios
· Supervise children at all times.

· Reinforce each child's appropriate behavior

· Do not expect individual children to do things they are not developmentally ready to do
· Do not discipline children for behaviors that are to be expected for the child's age or the individual child
· Make sure your behavioral expectations are based on what is good, healthy and individually appropriate for the child – not what is convenient for the adult.

INDIVIDUAL MANAGEMENT

· Modeling
· Special needs/Individualization
· Activity
· Supervision
· Reinforcement
· DAP – Developmentally appropriate Practice

IGNORE

- Some negative behavior is produced by child to get attention.
- The behavior may stop when the child does not get the attention desired.
- Try ignoring the behavior unless it is unsafe or an issue that cannot be ignored.

Does moving around in circle time qualify as an ignorable behavior? How about mashing all my food together at snack time?

REDIRECTION AND DISTRACTION

- Offer alternatives to children to engaged in undesired behavior:
- ❑ Suggest new activity.
- ❑ Engage in an activity with the child.
- ❑ Introduce the child to another toy, activity, or another child to play with.
- ❑ Suggest the child play alone.

How long does a redirection last?

INTERVENE

Verbal Intervention

- If the child is old enough cognitively, explain why the behavior is inappropriate.
- Give the child appropriate ways to handle the situation.
  - Often this includes, naming the feelings or emotions involved.
  - You could say, "Instead of hitting, tell Joe why you are angry with him."

Logical Consequences

- Teacher's action or response must logically relate to the behavior.
- If a child is hitting with blocks, remove child from blocks or take the blocks away. Ask the child to make the choice.
- If a child becomes angry and throws the blocks on the floor, have them pick them up.

Cause and effect is a language children understand

TAKE A BREAK

- This is not time out!
- This child is assisted to a room or area where they are supervised at all times.
- The child has access to activities and materials while in Take a Break. The intent is to cool down and distract not isolate.
- The child may return to group when he/she feels he/she is ready _and_ when the negative behavior stops or is significantly reduced.
- This is generally for children over 18 months of age. Under 18 months, just use distraction and redirection.
- More than 2 Take a Breaks in one day warrants a notification to parents. Keep them involved to find a resolution and solution to help the child be more productive.
- Teachers can and should interact with the child in Take a break, this builds rapport and security with the child.

PROGRESSIVE GUIDANCE IN A NUTSHELL

- Take a Break should not be the first avenue, work from the bottom of the pyramid up.
- The steps should be tailored to the maturity of the child, developmental level, special needs, and individual differences.
- Progressive Guidance must be Related to the behavior, Respectful to the Child as a human, and Reasonable. The 3 R's.

"You can guide your children toward becoming compassionate, heart-centered adults who lead fulfilling, 'no-limit' lives."

Dr. Wayne Dyer

ACTIVITY

- Think about where you study?
- Where you work?
- Where you relax?
- Where you enjoy your friends?

?

SUCCESSFUL ENVIRONMENTS HAVE…

- Clearly defined centers
- Attractive and logical displays of materials
- Toys and materials labeled
- Quiet areas and active areas
- Cozy space
- Feeling of home and comfort
- Attractive and meaningful displays of children's work and art
- Child centered activities
- Pictures of children and their families

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

MESSAGES FROM YOU AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- "This is a place like your home"
- "You belong here and we like you"
- "This is a place you can trust"
- "This place is safe and interesting to explore"
- "You can do many things"

"Children do not need to be made to learn about the world, or shown how. They want to, and they know how."
John Holt

www.LifeLearningMagazine.com

QUESTIONS?

Your child has the right to make his own choices.
You have the right to decide how you respond.
EmpoweringParents.com

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IV Environment

As you may have noticed, the topic of the environment has come up several times throughout this manual. The environment can be used as another teaching tool. First, I want you to take a few minutes and think about a place where you feel at most ease? Where you relax? Where you sit with friends? Or where you study?

Now don't you think it would be nice if you could wrap those elements up into a classroom for children? Children are plucked out of their home each day and dropped off in our care, sometimes really early in the morning, hungry and tired, and then we expect them to come in smile, follow our routine, and learn. So what can we do to make the experience as pleasant as possible for them?

You can start by ensuring that your classroom is safe, clean, warm, and inviting. You are probably asking what this looks like? It starts with clearly defined centers. Clearly defined centers provide stability and routine. Developmentally appropriate practices recommend that classrooms have up to eleven interest areas based on the age and developmental abilities of the children. These interest areas can include a variation of blocks, dramatic play, toys and games, art, library, discovery/science, sand/water, music/movement, computers, and woodworking. Ensuring that the centers are set up, organized, and clearly labeled with words and pictures lets children know that the environment is there for them and ready to be explored.

Each classroom should have attractive and logical displays of materials from the children. This is not to say that you cannot have store bought materials in your classroom, but the majority of art and displays in the room should be from your children to remind them that the room is theirs and their work has value. Today, the most experienced teachers also try to incorporate a

variety of diversity items in the form of toys, photos, fabrics, supplies, and family mementos to ensure that all families feel welcome and appreciated.

Every classroom benefits from a balance of active and cozy areas. Sometimes a child might just need a cozy space within line of sight of a teacher to cool down or relax without interruption and every child loves a good tumble, so a padded area to run, jump, tumble, and play goes a long way.

The key to all of these areas is that they are all child-centered. The interest areas are organized on low open shelves that the children can manipulate and explore at will. The cozy areas and soft toys are available to use when the children think they need them. The final touch is to add pictures and personal items from each child's family so that they feel like they are in a home away from home. Building a strong engaging and homey environment where positive guidance is being implemented for children can only help build strong positive self-image for children and make working with these children easier for teachers.

Once you have the environment set up, work with the children to build your sense of community. Establish rules together and allow the children to be a part of making the rules so that they have ownership. Keep in mind that the rules need to be short, logical, and relative to the age of the children you are working with. For example, a two-year-old is not going to come to circle time and sit for 30 minutes, so do not be disappointed when they move on. Establish community helpers in the older rooms so that everyone can feel like they are gaining responsibility. Promote positive relationships by modeling positive communication in your environment. Teach social problem solving skills to improve your learning community. As the children get older and learn to respect each other and the community that they live in, they will

also learn to communicate in a more positive manner. This all starts here in your child centered

environment.
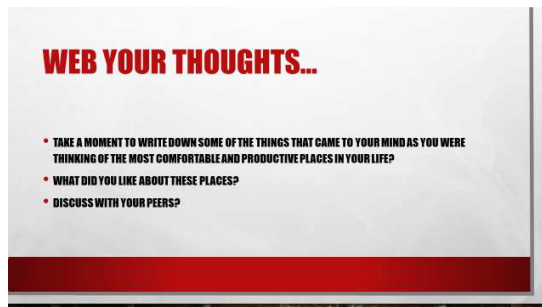
<Environments Presentation>

SUCCESSFUL ENVIRONMENTS HAVE…

- CLEARLY DEFINED CENTERS
- ATTRACTIVE AND LOGICAL DISPLAYS OF MATERIALS
- TOYS AND MATERIALS LABELED
- QUIET AREAS AND ACTIVE AREAS
- COZY SPACE

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- ATTRACTIVE AND MEANINGFUL DISPLAYS OF CHILDREN'S WORK AND ART
- CHILD CENTERED ACTIVITIES
- PICTURES OF CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

WHAT DOES YOUR ENVIRONMENT SAY?

- CLEAN DEFINED CENTERS SAY- COME EXPLORE ME!
- LOGICAL DISPLAYS SAY- YOU MAKE SENSE!
- LABELS SAY- YOU ARE SMART AND CAN MANAGE ME ON YOUR OWN!
- COZY SPACE SAYS- RELAX!
- COMFORT SPACE SAYS- I AM GLAD YOU ARE HERE!

ENVIRONMENTS...

- PERSONAL ART DISPLAYS SAY- YOUR WORK MATTERS!
- CHILD CENTERED ACTIVITIES SAY – THIS IS YOUR PLACE!
- PICTURES OF HOME AND FAMILY SAY- YOU ARE WELCOME!

SUCCESSFUL TEACHERS USE THE ENVIRONMENT TO ENGAGE CHILDREN IN MEANINGFUL ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE BULK OF THE DAY.

MESSAGES FROM YOU AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- "THIS IS A PLACE LIKE YOUR HOME"
- "YOU BELONG HERE AND WE LIKE YOU"
- "THIS IS A PLACE YOU CAN TRUST"
- "THIS PLACE IS SAFE AND INTERESTING TO EXPLORE"
- "YOU CAN DO MANY THINGS"

QUESTIONS?

V Bringing It All Together

Now that we have discussed the most important elements of a quality-learning environment, what does it all mean? The goal of building a quality early childhood environment is not only to provide strong, quality learning experiences for children; but, to provide strong, satisfying work experiences for teachers. The goal is to help teachers feel strong, confident, competent, and satisfied in the workplace so that they stay in the field and continue to provide quality learning experiences for children. Leaders should be building a consistent, seamless, credible, and rewarding profession for early childhood providers no matter what type of challenge that arises in the workplace. In the right environment, with the right training, with the right resources, and the right professional, children can have the most amazing early childhood experience that will set the foundation for the rest of their life.

While it is important to utilize the tools that we have discussed here, keep in mind that children develop and learn at different rates. There is no blueprint for how each child will perform and respond to the things that you expose them to, so each time you introduce an idea, concept, or technique you may have to modify it based on how the children respond. This process is what defines the difference between a good teacher and a great teacher. This is also where some teachers get lost and lose satisfaction and focus. The important thing to remember when working with young children is that when working with young children, let them set the pace and guide the learning. Then you can never feel insufficient or dissatisfied with the outcome because your purpose is to be there for the children and help them reach the goals that you set together.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

During a face-to-face interview the following questions were be asked by the researcher. The goal was to get an in depth idea how teachers feel about working with children with challenging behaviors and the overall work environment that they serve.

General Interview Questions

What factors at work make you feel good about working here?

What factors or experiences impact your satisfaction with your job choice?

How do your expectations of your work environment compare with the reality?

How does your administration support you as a teacher?

How do you think your education, experience, and/or training impact how you feel about your job?

How does dealing with challenging behaviors impact how you feel about your job?

Is there anything you would like to add that you feel has an impact on your job satisfaction?

Appendix C: Observation Tool

Observer

Classroom   Ratio

Time

Date

Setting

Activity observed

Appendix D: Demographics

Name

Age

Time in this position

Time in early childhood field

Education level   High school   College   BA   MA

Years' experience as lead teacher

Years' experience as assistant teacher

Years' experience in accredited center