



The Child Care Educator

TRANSFORMING YOUR CHILD CARE PROGRAM INTO A SUCCESSFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.

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De Carla Burton, M.Ed., draws on over two decades of experience as a Family Child Care Educator. She is the founder and director of Jump Smart Learning Academy, focused on the developmental needs of children aged 2 to 7.

In addition to her role at Jump Smart Learning Academy, Mrs. Burton is an Educational Consultant and CEO of Sharing Knowledge Consultants, specializing in advanced training programs for educators across diverse subjects.

Furthermore, she founded Supporting Professionals Network Association (S.P.N.A.), a nonprofit dedicated to supporting Family Child Care providers. For more information about her book, trainings, and resources, please visit www.shareyourknow.com.

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Description

- The child care educator wears many hats in their daily roles. These roles encompass Caregiver, Entrepreneur, Business Manager, and Teacher as they balance various responsibilities that go far beyond just caring for children. Each of these roles requires distinct skills and dedication.
- Having a clear understanding of your skills is valuable when you open your home to care for children. This training will present strategies around best practice to help you improve your learning environment and promote the importance of professional development.

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Agenda

Roles of a childcare educator
Understand your role as a family child care educator and discover your strengths & challenges for personal growth

Discover the Benefits of Professional Development.
Professional Development support family child care educators in their career, allowing them to gain new skills and become more intentional in their work.

How to Create Engaging Learning Environments
What should an environment for children look like? How do you create supports that meet children's needs and make learning fun. We will look at strategies to enhance and improve your environment.

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What Are Other Hats You Can think Of That Child Care Educators Wear?

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION
CAREGIVER, ENTREPRENEUR
BUSINESS MANAGER, TEACHER

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**Caregiver
Family
Childcare
Educator**

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Attributes/Great Family Childcare Educator

- Patience
- Warmth and Affection
- Attentiveness
- Passion for Early Childhood Development

- Emotional Stability
- Strong Work Ethic
- Respect and Open-Mindedness
- Creativity
- Life Learner

Select an attribute and share why it is important and share 1 example.

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Caregiver



- Emotional Support:** Child care educators are not only responsible for a child's safety but also for their emotional well-being.
- They create a nurturing environment where children feel secure, loved, and valued.
- This includes providing comfort when a child is upset, reassuring them in new or unfamiliar situations, and fostering a sense of trust and safety.


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Nurturing Environment Help Children Thrive

- In a loving child care environment, children should feel emotionally safe, valued, and supported in order to thrive and be open to learning.

- A child care setting that fosters these feelings provides a foundation for social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

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Acknowledge Your Children

Acknowledge Their Arrival: Acknowledge the child's arrival with interest and enthusiasm. Ask about their morning or something they may be looking forward to during the day to engage them in conversation.

Encourage Peer Greetings: Encourage children to greet each other with kindness and respect, fostering a supportive and inclusive atmosphere among peers.

Create a Welcoming Environment: Ensure the physical environment is inviting with colorful decorations, cozy areas for quiet activities, and displays of children's artwork or achievements.

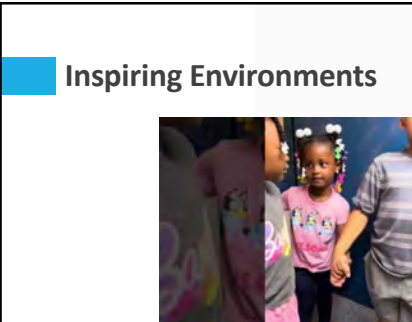
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Welcoming Environment

FRIENDLY AND OPEN GREETING: GREET EACH CHILD WARMLY AS THEY ARRIVE, WITH A SMILE AND PERSONAL ATTENTION. THIS SETS THE TONE FOR THE DAY AND MAKES CHILDREN FEEL WELCOME.

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Inspiring Environments



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Physical Care

- Educators ensure the children's basic needs are met, such as feeding, diapering, and assisting with potty training.
- They also keep track of each child's routine and well-being to ensure they are healthy and comfortable.

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Supporting Children's Routines & Care.

- Family child care educators play a crucial role in monitoring and supporting each child's routine and well-being to ensure they are healthy, comfortable, and thriving. To achieve this, they implement various strategies and tools that help track children's daily activities, physical health, emotional needs, and development.

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Supporting Children

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| ▪ Daily Logs or Journals: | ▪ Tracking Developmental Milestones: |
| ▪ Health Monitoring and Care | ▪ Comfort and Emotional Well-being: |
| ▪ Routine Consistency: | ▪ Meal and Snack Tracking: |
| ▪ Observations and Check-ins: | ▪ Creating a Safe and Comfortable Physical Environment: |
| ▪ Individualized Support: | ▪ Parent Communication: |

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Supporting Children

Family child care providers keep track of each child's routine and well-being by combining careful observation, record-keeping, personalized care, and communication with parents.

They create a supportive environment where children's needs are met, whether it's through physical care, emotional support, developmental tracking, or routine management.

This holistic approach ensures that children feel safe, loved, and supported, helping them thrive in every aspect of their growth.


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Safety

- Child care educators are vigilant about keeping the children safe from physical harm, whether it's supervising playtime, ensuring the environment is child-proofed, or teaching them to follow safety rules.

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Name ways to create a safe environment.



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Secure Furniture and Heavy Objects

- Anchor Furniture:** Secure bookshelves, cabinets, dressers, and other tall or heavy furniture to the wall to prevent tipping if children climb or pull on them.
- Corner Protectors:** Add soft corner protectors to sharp furniture edges like tables, counters, or cabinets to prevent injuries from bumps or falls.
- Non-Tip Furniture:** Choose furniture with a sturdy design that is less likely to tip over. Avoid tables or chairs that are too top-heavy.

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Safety Gates and Barriers

- Stairway Gates:** Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs to prevent children from accessing dangerous areas.
- Door and Hallway Gates:** Use gates to block access to rooms with potential hazards, like kitchens or bathrooms, or to create child-friendly play areas.
- Outdoor Fencing:** Ensure any outdoor play areas are enclosed with a secure fence to keep children from wandering off.

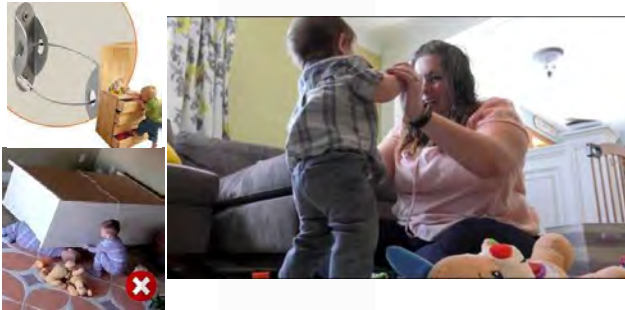
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Electrical Safety

- **Outlet Covers:** Use safety plugs or covers to prevent children from sticking objects into electrical outlets.
- **Cord Management:** Keep cords for blinds, curtains, and electrical appliances out of reach or secure them with cord organizers or covers to avoid strangulation hazards.
- **Electrical Appliances:** Keep any electrical appliances like toasters, coffee makers, or space heaters out of children's reach. Always unplug appliances when not in use.



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Sharp and Hazardous Items

- **Lock Cabinets:** Use childproof locks or latches on cabinets or drawers that contain sharp objects (knives, scissors, etc.), cleaning supplies, or other dangerous substances.
- **Secure Tools:** Store tools, scissors, and art supplies that have sharp edges in secure, out-of-reach places.
- **Remove Small Objects:** Small objects, such as buttons, coins, or small toys, can be choking hazards. Keep them out of areas accessible to children under the age of 3.

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Choking Tester



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Creating a Child Care Environment that Supports Children's Exploration

- Encouraging safe exploration is an important job for child care educators. Children are natural explorers and risk takers.
- They move quickly, put things in their mouths, drop or throw things, and love to climb and hide. Keeping children safe is crucial



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Floor Safety

Safe Flooring Materials: Consider installing soft, cushioned flooring in areas where children will be playing or engaging in physical activities to reduce the risk of injury during falls.



Non-Slip Rugs: Use non-slip rugs or mats in play areas, bathrooms, and kitchens to prevent children from slipping and falling.



Clean Spills Immediately: Quickly clean up spills to prevent slips, especially on hard flooring like tile or wood.

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Active Supervision



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Setting Up The Environment

- Setting up an environment where you spend all day saying
 - "Don't touch this!" or "Stay away from that!" is not the answer.
 - Instead of spending time redirecting children, think carefully about how you set up the environment.
- Giving children the chance to explore freely in a well-organized and child-safe space is a much more effective way to manage behavior and encourage learning.

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Environment Tips

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Base | Base the design on the developmental needs of the children and accommodating their individual differences. |
| Arrange | Arrange the space in a way that encourages children to make choices from a variety of available activities. |
| Arrange | Arrange the spaces so children can move around easily (and safely!) and easily access the equipment and materials. |

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Create distinct learning areas or centers for different types of activities,

- **Art Area:** Provide easels, art supplies, and a variety of materials for creative expression.
- **Reading Nook:** Set up a cozy area with comfortable seating, pillows, and a wide selection of age-appropriate books.
- **Block Area:** Include building blocks, construction sets, and manipulative toys to encourage spatial reasoning and problem-solving skills.

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Learning Centers

Dramatic Play Area: Designate a space with dress-up clothes, pretend kitchen sets, and props for imaginative play.

Sensory Area: Incorporate sensory bins with materials like sand, water, rice, or beans for tactile exploration.

Quiet Area: Provide a space where children can relax, listen to stories, or engage in calming activities.

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Comfortable and Cozy Spaces

Create areas where children can feel safe and comfortable, such as a cozy reading nook with pillows and blankets or a soft area for rest. This helps children feel secure and relaxed.

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Cheerful Environments

Use bright, engaging colors and playful artwork on the walls. Display children's artwork to foster a sense of pride and ownership in the space. Soft lighting and child-friendly furniture create a cozy, inviting atmosphere.



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Creating Cheerful Spaces

•Lighting considerations such as dimmer switches for lights and strategic placement of lighting to emphasize and de-emphasize areas of the playroom.

•Where possible, modify ceiling height and, more broadly, space size to help in creating learning environments that are comfortable and nurturing



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- **Soft, responsive environments.** Children who spend most of their day in one environment need surfaces that respond to them, not hard surfaces that they must conform to.
- Sand, water, grass, rugs and pillows, and the lap of a caregiver respond to a child's basic physical needs (Prescott, 1994).

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Jump Smart Classroom



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Ensure Comfort



- Wherever possible, provide children with a small space of their own for their belongings, such as a cubby for their coats and bags. This can be small, but a significant sense of comfort for children as it is a constant throughout their day at your child care facility.

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Tranquil Space

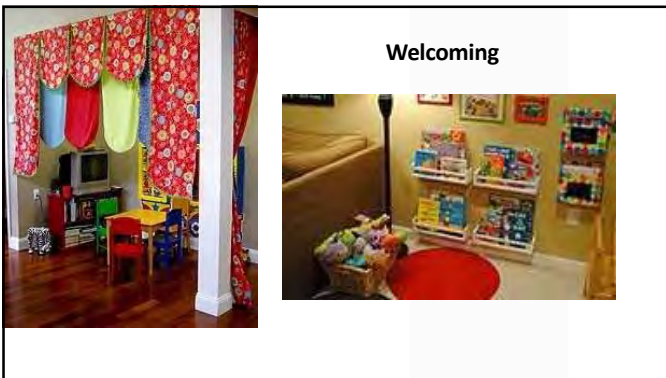


Tranquil Space

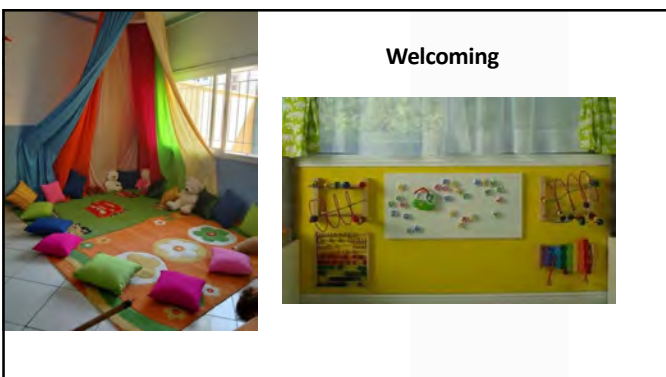
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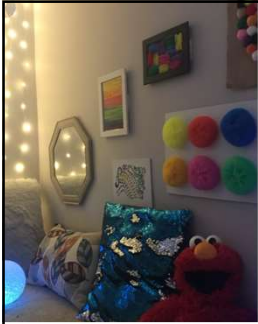
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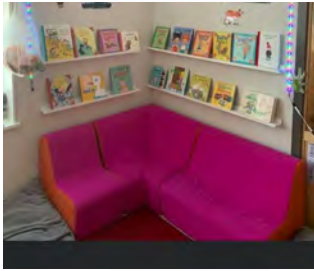
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Creating Calming Spaces

- Encourage children to have alone time when they may feel out of control. Sending a child to a “feel-good” area and emphasizing that they are there to have some alone time rather than as punishment removes the child from a situation that’s causing them distress, provides much-needed comfort and allows for the problem-solving process to start on its own.

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Create Order And Remove Clutter



- Part of developing appropriate learning environments for infants and toddlers is to give clarity and model the importance of cleanliness and organization.
- While children themselves will have their own tendencies when it comes to maintaining order, it's important that clutter doesn't inhibit the children from fully experiencing the learning environment that you've created!

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Place For Belongings



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Organization Tips

- Separating toys by kind of play, or by times of day that children would gravitate towards them.
- Create boundaries for play using visual cues such as area carpets or bookcases as dividers.
- Look for short shelves, colorful bins and baskets, and other accessible furniture that children can still safely access.



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Organization Tips



- Consider implementing a regular cleaning time and even make it a game, such as the 10-Minute Tidy!
- Depending on the age of the children, you can also consider creating a learning environment with labels, either with easy words or pictures to help children organize especially during their 10-Minute Tidy!

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Final Thoughts...

- Overall, creating an environment that supports a child's educational development involves fostering a nurturing, stimulating, and inclusive space where children feel valued, challenged, and motivated to explore and learn.

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Family Child Care Entrepreneur

- An individual who operates a child care business from their own home, providing early childhood education and care services to children in a small, home-based setting. This type of child care provider is often referred to as a "home-based child care provider" or "family child care provider."
- The entrepreneurial aspect comes from the fact that they are managing a business, balancing the needs of the children with the operational, financial, and regulatory aspects of running their own enterprise.

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Entrepreneur Hat

- A family child care entrepreneur typically runs their business from their own home, which allows for a more personalized, flexible, and intimate environment for children.
- The entrepreneur sets up their home to meet child care standards, such as creating safe play areas, ensuring childproofing, and providing age-appropriate toys and educational materials.

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Business Manager

- **Administrative Tasks:** Child care educators often handle the administrative side of their business, including scheduling, billing, and communicating with parents.
- This can involve keeping track of children's attendance, managing waiting lists, and coordinating pick-up and drop-off schedules.

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Business Manager

- **Hiring and Managing Staff:** For larger child care centers, educators may oversee other staff members.
- This includes hiring qualified teachers or assistants, providing training, and ensuring that all employees are following safety and educational protocols.

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Business Manager

- **Problem-Solving:** Business management also involves troubleshooting day-to-day issues, from resolving conflicts between children to handling difficult parent concerns.
- Educators must remain calm under pressure and make decisions that maintain the best interest of both children and their business.

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Financial Management

- **Financial Management:** As entrepreneurs, child care educators must budget, handle finances, and keep track of income and expenses.
- They need to manage costs associated with supplies, utilities, and possibly staff wages, while also ensuring the business remains profitable.

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Legal & Regulatory Knowledge

- Child care educators need to stay updated on local, state, and federal regulations regarding licensing, health and safety standards, and compliance with child care laws.
- They are responsible for ensuring their businesses meet all necessary legal requirements to operate safely and legally.

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Educational Development



Child care educators are also teachers who focus on the developmental and educational needs of children. They create and implement age-appropriate curricula that promote cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.



This includes introducing basic concepts like numbers, letters, colors, and shapes, as well as fostering skills like communication and problem-solving.

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Child Care Educator Instruction and Facilitation

- Teachers in child care settings create a structured environment for learning, organizing activities that encourage creativity, curiosity, and independence.
- Whether it's art projects, reading time, or outdoor play, educators facilitate learning in a way that's engaging and fun.

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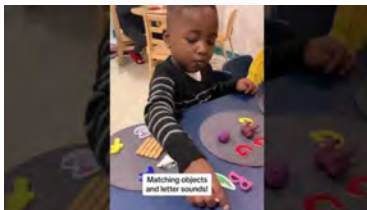
Great Child Care Educators Should Possess The Following Qualities.

Audience Participation: Which Quality Stands Out For You?

- Enthusiasm and Passionate
- Ability to Provide a Stimulating Environment
- Ability to Engage and Interact with Children to make learning FUN!
- Be Creative, Flexible and firm.

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Engage Children and Make Learning Fun



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**Knowledge of
Child
Development**

- A strong understanding of child development theories and milestones helps create developmentally appropriate activities and environments that support children's growth.

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**Commitment
To Professional
Development**

- Continuing to learn and grow through professional development opportunities allows teachers to stay current with best practices and enhance their teaching skills.

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How To Foster A Child's Educational Development.

- **Holistic Development:** It's crucial to consider all aspects of a child's growth, including cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development. An environment that supports educational development should nurture these areas in balance.
- **Stimulating Learning Environment:** This entails providing varied and enriching experiences that encourage curiosity, exploration, and discovery. It includes access to age-appropriate resources, materials, and activities that challenge and engage children.



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Development

- Holistic Development of a child refers to the approach of nurturing all aspects of a child's growth, focusing on their physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and moral development.
- It's about supporting the child in becoming a well-rounded individual, with an emphasis on their overall well-being and the interconnectedness of all these areas.

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Helping Children Thrive

Supportive Relationships: Positive interactions with caregivers, teachers, and peers are vital for educational development. These relationships foster trust, encourage communication, and provide emotional support, which are fundamental for learning.

Individualized Learning: Recognizing and catering to each child's unique strengths, interests, and learning styles helps create a personalized learning journey. This can enhance motivation and deepen understanding.

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Helping Children Thrive

- **Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity:** Recognizing and respecting diverse backgrounds, languages, and cultures enriches the educational environment.
- It promotes empathy, understanding, and a broader worldview among children.

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Qualities of a Successful Child Care Educator

The role of a great child care educator is not just about keeping children safe, comfortable and fed but to create a warm, nurturing environment where young children can thrive.

A huge part of young children's care has to do with their **educational development**. It is therefore important that parents look for great teacher qualities in their child care providers to start them on the road to learning..

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Preparing Children For Success!

Play-Based Learning: Acknowledging the importance of play in early childhood education is crucial. Play supports the development of cognitive skills, social-emotional competence, and language development in young children.

↓

Continuous Assessment and Feedback: Regular assessment and constructive feedback help track progress, identify areas for improvement, and celebrate achievements. This promotes a growth mindset and encourages children to strive for continuous learning.

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- **Play Base Learning** - Is a way of teaching where children learn important skills and concepts by engaging in play.
- It's based on the idea that children naturally learn best when they are active and involved in hands-on, enjoyable activities.
- Instead of sitting through structured lessons, children explore, experiment, and use their imagination in ways that help them understand the world around them.

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- Children learn by exploring their environment. When they play with toys, interact with nature, or try out new games, they make discoveries that help them understand how things work.
- **Example:** A child playing in a pretend doctor's office, examining a patient, she/he learns about the tools used to examine patients, and role-playing while pretending to be a doctor.

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Continuous and
regular assessment
with constructive
feedback

- Is essential in tracking children's progress and fostering a growth mindset in a learning environment.
- This process helps identify strengths, pinpoint areas for improvement, and celebrate achievements, which motivates children to keep learning and growing.

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Observations in Play-Based Learning



- A child is observed during play activities, such as building a tower with blocks. The teacher notes how the child organizes the blocks, the strategies they use, and how they solve problems (e.g., balancing the blocks, deciding how to stack them).

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Constructive Feedback

- After the activity, the teacher says, "I noticed you made a really tall tower! It was impressive how you balanced the tiles. Next time, let's see if we can make the tower even taller but this time use only the square shapes."
- This feedback acknowledges the child's effort and achievement, while also encouraging them to think about how to improve further, fostering a growth mindset.



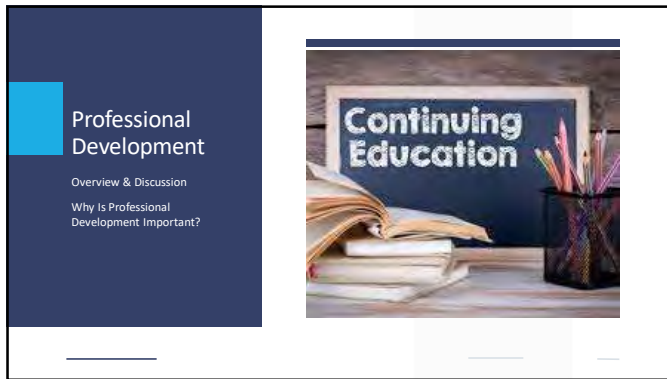
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Regular Assessment

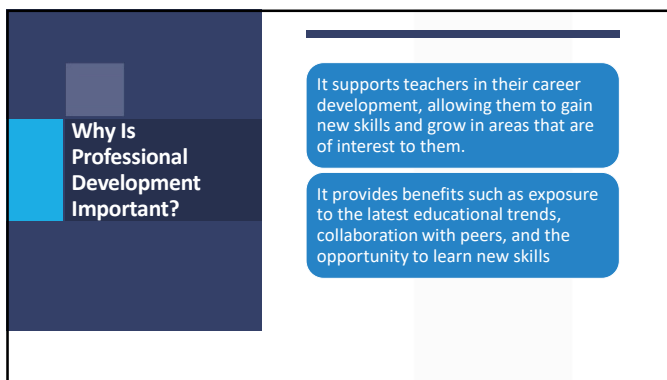


- Continuous and regular assessment combined with constructive feedback creates a positive learning environment where children are motivated to grow, develop new skills, and build resilience.
- This approach nurtures a mindset that embraces learning as an ongoing, rewarding process.

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What Is Professional Development in Child care

- It is any type of continuing education for child care professionals.
- It's one of the best ways for early childhood teachers to improve their skills and boost children's learning outcomes.
- Early childhood teachers can acquire professional skills from seminars, workshops, courses, conferences and retreats.
- They can learn independently through research and peer-to-peer initiatives

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Audience Participation

- Name a professional development opportunity you participated in that provided new skills and/or knowledge that you were able to use for personal growth or to enhance your child care program.

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What Are Requirements For A Childcare License In Illinois?

- You must contact your local Department of Children and Family Services to obtain an application and submit it for processing.
- no fee is charged to get a child care license
- you are expected to provide a safe and healthy home environment with adequate equipment and space
- must be at least 18 years of age
- must enjoy working with children
- must have a good understanding of the physical and emotional needs of young children
- must be certified in CPR, First Aid, and the Heimlich Maneuver
- must be fingerprinted by DCFS and pass a background check

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Obtaining A Child Care License In Illinois

- <https://sunshine.dcf.illinois.gov/Content/Licensing/BecomeLicensed.aspx>
- <http://www.ccrs.illinois.edu/providers/licensing.html>

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The Child Development Associate Credential

CDA

- A widely recognized credential in early childhood education administered by the Council for Professional Development.
- The CDA Credential guides early child care professionals as they work toward becoming qualified teachers of young children.
- Obtaining a CDA is an important accomplishment and one that develops well informed practitioners knowledgeable in child development and best practices for teaching young children.

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CDA Credential

3 Steps to Earning Your CDA Credential

STEP 2

Complete the CDA Exam

Select a Professional Development Specialist

Verification visit and review of all documentation



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ExceleRate Illinois

Helps you prepare children for success in school and in life.

- As an early learning and development program, you play a pivotal role in giving our state's youngest children the best start in life. Now there's a new system in Illinois that can help you make quality your top priority:
- This quality rating and improvement system gives you a process to improve developmental skills among the children you impact.
- ExceleRate Illinois also provides standards, guidelines, resources and supports to help you make sensible changes that lead to better quality outcomes.
- ExceleRate is a comprehensive system that includes:
 - Licensed Child Care Centers
 - Licensed Family/Group Child Care Home
 - School Based Preschool Programs
 - Head Start/Early Head Start Programs

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What is ExceleRate Illinois

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Gateway I-learning

<https://courses.inccrra.org/>

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Increased Engagement and Retention

Investing in your professional growth shows that you are committed to your career and your goal of helping children succeed.

Ongoing learning helps you feel more connected to your work and understand how to contribute to the overall goals of your program.



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Leadership Connections is a renowned conference that draws both national and international early care and education professionals. It features interactive sessions and captivating keynote speakers specifically for leaders in early childhood education, including program owners, directors and administrators, policymakers, college instructors, technical assistance specialists, state registry professionals, resource and referral specialists, researchers, trainers, and consultants.

Leadership in Bloom

May 7-10, 2025 – Schaumburg, IL

<https://mccormickcenter.nlu.edu/>

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Collaboration



Supporting Professionals Network Association (SPNA)

- Collaboration in professional development empowers educators to learn from each other, address challenges more effectively, and create positive outcomes for student learning.
- It strengthens professional relationships, promotes innovation, and supports the ongoing evolution of teaching practices in response to the diverse needs of learners.

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Opportunities For Collaboration

By collaborating with other educators, families, and community stakeholders, family child care providers/educators/child care professionals, can enrich their practice, improve outcomes for children, and contribute to a supportive and inclusive early childhood education environment.

Audience Participation – Name ways professionals can collaborate in the field.

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Stay Connected

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Thank you

QUESTIONS?

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