

A Matter of Instruction: With a Robust Child Development Center

Early Childhood Education is one of the **largest vocational programs** in the District and as such should have a lab on campus. Since 2004, there have been 127 AS degrees and 170 Certificates awarded; and the numbers have been rising in the last 3 years in both categories

Year	AS	Certificate
2006-07	25	20
2007-08	24	25
2008-09	40	40

In addition, there are many classes that use the Child Development Center for **student teaching and observations**, both of the program as well as of the children and staff themselves.

*5 Sections of Child Development are offered each semester. The majority of them require observing children, and offer the CDC as a convenient and cooperative site for such observations. These assignments are required in both the Early Childhood Education and Psychology sections of Child Development. Nearly half of Browne's 201 class observed in one or both of the classrooms for a 2-year –old or 3-4 year olds.

*2 sections of Student Teaching Practicum are offered each semester. Of the 40 students served each Fall and Spring, at least 4-6 students do their fieldwork placement at the CDC. These students each spend 96 hours per term and many either volunteer or work as student work-study aides in subsequent semesters.

*The Observational Skills course, offered 1-2 times per year, requires every student to observe a child for half the term and learn to evaluate a program. Usually close to 50% of these students select a child or the center at Skyline for this work.

*The ECE Curriculum required core course is offered day and evening. The day class visits the CDC each term to assess curriculum, and would be unable to complete this on-campus assignment otherwise; a group field trip is not possible to arrange during the class time.

There are many ways that a vibrant Child Development Center could be utilized by **other departments** on campus. Students in Administration of Justice could complete assignments about working with families; Allied Health could practice health assessments. The Dance program has inquired about course development around dance instruction with children, and both Music and Physical Education could do the same. The Psychology course on marriage & family could include observations or interviews with parents about family like and parenthood, and Natural Science students could try teaching concepts through offering simple experiments in the classroom. The possibilities are exciting, and the Early Childhood Education Department is supportive.

Further, **changes in public policy** that may be beneficial to early care and education are on the horizon in the near future. Research emphasizes the life-long importance of high quality early education for young children. The following initiatives are leading up to policy changes that can provide the College with support to continue the CDC:

*In September 2008, the Governor approved SB 1629, sponsored by Senator Daryl Steinberg, which included the creation of the California Early Learning Quality Improvement System Advisory Committee. The Committee is in the process of developing a policy and implementation plan for a statewide early learning quality improvement system for children birth to five. The purpose of the CAEL QIS is to improve outcomes for children and reduce California's school readiness gap by improving the quality of early learning and care programs throughout the State. Funding for the Advisory Committee's work is provided by First 5 State Commission and Packard Foundation. In addition, Superintendent Jack O'Connell's P-16 Council and the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence have called for a comprehensive early childhood package as a foundation of school reform. Recommendations include expanding preschool, making strategic investments in quality and measuring and providing incentives to promote preschool quality.

*Over a 2 year process, the Committee, staffed by the California Dept. of Education, is working with stakeholders across the State to redesign California's framework for early learning and care programs. Development of the quality improvement system involves building on research, policies, program information and best practices at the national, state and local levels.

*Currently, California's system of publicly funded early learning and care programs targeted to low-income children is extremely underfunded and programs have no financial incentive, given the current reimbursement structure to achieve higher quality. An integral part of redesigning the framework for CA early learning and care system includes providing financial incentives to support quality like subsidy payments from the State that increase with higher quality ratings (tiered subsidy reimbursements and quality grants that reward higher program quality levels).

*The process of redesigning our current system and developing a comprehensive quality improvement system is moving very quickly in order to put California in a position to compete for a tremendous amount of federal funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of which California will receive 10.7 million and through the Early Learning Challenge Grant which would provide \$8 billion over eight years. These funds will be used to fund the new system. The Advisory Committee's work must be completed by December 2010.

As a result of the new CAEL Quality Improvement System, our District and the College are poised to reap the benefits of the tiered reimbursement system being developed. Programs like ours, already operating at higher levels of quality, stand to receive additional funding. This is an exciting time for early learning because CA has finally made a commitment to increasing efficiency and resources to support and reward quality. When everything else in education is at risk of being cut, early learning and care programs that serve low-income children are going to see increases in funding.

Respectfully, Kate Williams Browne 11/09

