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VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Pauline Kugmeh, M & M Daycare

Authentic Community Engagement: Professional Learning Experience A Personal Reflection



Written by Lin Nordmeyer

Pauline Kugmeh has worked in the early childhood field for more than 15 years. Currently, she owns and operates M&M Daycare, a family child care program in New Castle, Del. Like many early childhood educators, she is motivated because of her passion for caring for and educating young children.

Recently, Pauline wanted to learn more about community engagement, so she attended DIEEC's professional learning experience, "Authentic Community Engagement PLUS."

The professional learning experience includes a group reflective experience (GRE) where participants share what they learned during the workshop session. Pauline learned that community engagement is about building mutually respectful, strengths-based relationships between program educators, families, community members, and agencies.



Families gather at April 30, 2022 Battery Park picnic.

photo courtesy of Pauline Kugmeh

Next, participants select a goal and identify steps to implement after the workshop. Then during the GRE, they share their experience with colleagues about implementing their plan. A professional development coordinator guides these reports back through a framework of reflection.

Pauline set a goal to meet her families' needs more intentionally through connections to resources in the community. As a first step, she is engaging with families to build relationships and better understand their needs.

"One of the keys to successful partnerships is parents' engagement," said Pauline. "I want my families to know each other better and build a bridge of confidence via provider/families' interactions."

To accomplish this goal, Pauline created a "WhatsApp" chat group for her families to connect on their phones easily. Through these conversations, Pauline and her parents decided to have a picnic which she hosted on April 30 at Battery Park.

The professional learning experience provided Pauline with what she needed to set other goals to build productive and meaningful relationships and for her to develop the best practice of reflection.

"I learned a lot from this training," said Pauline. "I was able to take away how partnerships with families can build bridges of confidence and trust. Additionally, these relationships allow me to problem solve with parents by identifying the root cause of the problem."