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VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Spotlight on the Professional Learning Experience



The Business of Early Childhood: Leadership Cohort

Written by Lin Nordmeyer

We are taking a different approach to this issue's "Voices from the Field" installment. We are hearing from early childhood educators recently taking the DIEEC professional learning experience (PLE), "The Business of Early Childhood: Leadership Cohort." This PLE series brought together leaders in the field to build skills to help improve the quality and culture of their programs while supporting each other.

A group of about ten participants in Sussex County, Del. began meeting in September to participate in the first module, "The Business of Early Childhood: Your Purpose, Passion, and Position as a Leader." In this PLE, leaders learned about the importance of self-reflection and self-awareness and developed their understanding of how their values and beliefs shaped their leadership styles. Each participant identified their leadership style, learned the difference between leadership and management, and shared personal and program core values.

"This module helped me be open-minded and not be so hard on myself," said Mary Akins of Smart Start Learning Center. "I also understand that my staff has a different sense of ownership than I have."

The cohort finished the second PLE "Mission and Vision: The What, Why and How," right before the holidays. Together the group learned about the intent of a mission and vision statement and why they are important. Then the "hands-on" work began with each leader updating their program's mission to ensure it aligned with the program's values, followed by creating a vision statement.

Many reported that they involved their staff in creating the vision statement. "I had my staff develop vision statements and share their core values," said Frank Laura of Lil' Red Hen Nursery.

"These tools will help me with the hiring process to ensure values, mission, and vision are known and familiar to staff, parents, and volunteers," said Chantel Banks of Helping Hands Learning Center.

In January, the cohort begins the module "Your Role, as a Leader, In Creating a Great Place to Work." Through this workshop and coaching, leaders will understand the different dimensions contributing to a center's work climate.

By all accounts, participants can't wait to continue with this work.

"It's a great learning tool that has helped me be better at what I do. I met like-minded individuals and have built a network through this face-to-face learning experience," said Kristina Hassler of The Next Step Learning Center.

Marlette Lofland of Marlette's Colorful World Daycare, a family child care program, agrees with Kristina. "It's the best place for all the right answers, and the leaders will definitely lead you in the right direction."