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AUTHOR Hinitz, Blythe F.
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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the history of the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, created in 1972 to meet the growing need for skilled child care workers to provide quality programs for young children in the United States. A pilot program was launched in 1974, leading to the granting of CDA credentials in 1975. Since 1976 over 60,000 CDA credentials have been awarded, and Head Start's current mandate includes one CDA per classroom. Critiques of the CDA system are reviewed, as are adaptations and variations on the original curriculum and model. Other nontraditional child care training and credential programs are also described. It is concluded that the CDA credential has created a cadre of competent, skilled educators and caregivers. Weaknesses and challenges associated with the program include confusion about the status of CDAs within the early childhood profession, self-regulation within the credentialing process, and the limited scope of the credential in non-Head Start settings. (Contains 56 references.) (PB)

National Policies and Training Frameworks for Early Childhood Education the United States

The Child Development Associate and Other Credentialing Frameworks for Paraprofessionals

Blythe F. Hinitz, Ed.D.
Trenton State College
Trenton, New Jersey, U.S.A.

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Dr. Blythe Hinitz is Associate Professor of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at Trenton State College, Trenton, New Jersey, U.S.A. She is the Coordinator of the Junior Practicum Block and is the College Preschool Liaison. Dr. Hinitz is the current President of the New Jersey Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators and the past National Treasurer of the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators. She is the President-Elect of the Trenton Area Chapter of the Kappa Delta Pi honorary society. Dr. Hinitz has taught kindergarten through grade three in the New York City Public Schools and has served as a Head Start teacher, and an Advisor in the Child Development Associate training program at Community College of Philadelphia. She received her doctoral degree from Temple University and her Bachelors and Masters degrees from Brooklyn College of the City University of New York.

Most recent publications:

Hinitz, B. (1996). Guiding the Learning Experiences of Young Children: A course in early childhood education. In Friedman, E. et. al. Creating an inclusive college curriculum: Papers from the New Jersey Project. New York: Teachers College Press.

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Introduction

The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential was created in 1972 to meet the growing need for skilled child care workers to provide quality programs for young children in the United States. Several authors credit the early successes of Head Start with encouraging Dr. Edward Zigler, director of the Office of Child Development (OCD) of the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW)to seek the development of the CDA credential.

When representatives of thirty-nine child-related organizations gathered to form the CDA Consortium, there was input from a wide range of members of the profession. A pilot program was launched in 1974, which resulted in the granting of thirty-four CDA credentials in 1975. Twelve representative candidates were invited to Washington, DC to receive their credentials as the representatives of this new group of professionals. In November, 1995, three of the twenty-year "veteran" CDAs were feted at the headquarters of the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition for their continued professional accomplishments. Over the last twenty years, in excess of sixty thousand CDA credentials have been awarded, with approximately eighty percent received by employees of Head Start. Head Start's current mandates include one CDA in every classroom by September, 1996.

Questions

The discussion of the following questions should enable us to examine the CDA credentialing process more closely.

- What is a Child Development Associate (CDA)?
- What did the credentialing process look like at the early consortium meetings, in 1975, and why?
- How has it changed over the years, and how has it remained the same?
- What does CDA look like today?
- What concerns have critics of the system expressed, and how have they been addressed?
- What is the vision of CDA for the future?

Definitions

According to Morrison, (p. 162) "The CDA Program... is a major national effort to evaluate and improve the skills of caregivers in center-based, family day care, and home visitor programs." The CDA is defined as,

> "an individual who has successfully completed a CDA assessment and who has been awarded the CDA Credential. A CDA is a person who is able to meet the specific needs of children and who, with parents and other adults, works to nurture children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth in a child development framework. The CDA conducts her/himself in an ethical manner. The CDA has demonstrated competence in the CDA competency goals through his/her work in a center-based, home visitor, or family day care program. A person who has demonstrated bilingual competence in a bilingual child care program is a CDA with a bilingual specialization." (The Child Development Associate assessment system and competency standards: Preschool caregivers in center-based programs, 1992, p. 70).

Perry (in Seefeldt, 1990, p. 186) reports that,

> "the early conceptualization of the CDA program, in 1970, centered on improving the quality of care provided in child-care settings by increasing the competence of the program staff. The program was designed to serve newcomers seeking entry into the child care profession, experienced center staff who may have had little or no formal training, or personnel credentialed to work with older children, who wished to gain the skills needed to work with preschoolers. A lofty projection of the CDA program was to 'develop a middle level professional group to care for our nation's children...and put into place a mechanism whereby our society could develop, in fairly large numbers, a body of individuals who were trained and psychologically equipped to be caretakers of young children.' The basic purpose was to design and promote a system of training and credentialing individuals based on their demonstrated competency with children rather than course work taken at a university. A CDA was defined as a person who will be able to assume full responsibility for the daily activities of a group of young children in day-care centers, Head Start programs, private nursery schools, and other preschool programs. Unlike some hastily improvised programs of the past, serious thought and careful planning went into the development of the CDA program."

Early History

Dr. Edward Zigler, of OCD, convened a task force which included Drs. Barbara Biber, Jenny Klein, Evangeline Omwake, and Evangeline Ward. Their ideas, and those of other members of nongovernmental and governmental agencies led to the development of a set of preliminary competencies, [Insert circle charts (2) from Bouverat & Galen about here] guidelines for training, and a feasibility study by two 1971 task forces [the second consisting of Drs. Milton Akers and Marilyn Smith of the National Association for the Education of

Young Children (NAEYC)]. In June, 1972, the Child Development Associate Consortium (CDAC), made up of professional organizational and public representatives, was formed. A collaborative relationship, involving joint and comprehensive planning ensued (Bouverat and Galen, 1994, p.41). The prominent presence of Barbara Biber of Bank Street College of Education, and others with a strong emphasis on "human qualities" and a child development model, led to basic task force premises which "bore a strong semblance to the ideas of Lucy Sprague Mitchell ...a 'whole child' approach," according to Perry (1990, p. 186).

> "There was general agreement to a 'whole teacher' approach. Competency could not simply be represented by lists of isolated teaching behaviors to be checked off, but was seen as an integrated pattern of skills, attitudes, and feelings that provide meaning to the discrete behaviors. 'Competent teaching is not just the ability to perform skills according to a formula; it involves decisions that combine judgment and skill.' The task force maintained this qualitative view, that teaching was a distinctly human, intrinsically complex art, rather than the quantitative view that constituted so much of the performance- based education movement in the elementary school with its shopping lists of easily measurable teacher behaviors.... The CDA task force further differentiated between competence and competencies, the singular and the plural, with the thrust of the CDA program on the composite development of competence. Much effort went into assuring that the competencies represented a distinct point of view about teacher-child interaction as well as specific expectations of what the optimal experience for both teacher and children in an educational setting should be. Thus, the content of the competence definition was relevant and representative of competent caregiver performance." (Perry, 1990, p. 187)

Over a period of 2 years, the competencies were refined, examined, and researched by approximately 1,200 child development experts in culturally, philosophically, and administratively diverse child care programs. (Perry, 1990, p. 187) [Including the author, a doctoral student of Evangeline Ward at Temple University in the 1970s.] Of special concern to the task force was the question of pluralism. The nursery-school teacher prototype had been, to date, that of a middle-class teacher. There was a strong sentiment that the competencies should address the diversity of children and families encompassed in preschool settings.... (Perry, 1990, p. 188)

Implementation of Original Assessment/Credentialing System

Following the development of the competencies, the CDAC planned and organized the implementation of the CDA assessment and credentialing system. The competencies were

defined, training and assessment methods were developed, supply and demand were evaluated, guidelines and funding plans were formulated, and the Consortium set out to "promote an understanding and acceptance [of the CDA credential] among professionals, governmental bodies, and the general public..." (CDA Consortium quoted in Perry, 1990, p. 190).

The original set of competencies, upon which consensus was reached in 1974, were stated as child-development processes rather than IQ achievement scores. They have not changed measurably over the years, in spite of the fact that the credential has been housed with a number of different organizations. In the beginning, the Child Development Associate Consortium was the recipient of grants and contracts from the Office of Child Development in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. During the summer of 1980 it was known as the Child Development Associate National Program, and was in a state of flux because the future funding source was unknown. As some authors have written, this program continued to "rise like the phoenix from the ashes." Thus, in December of 1980 it came under the auspices of Bank Street College of Education, which continued the assessment and credentialing program under the name, CDA National Credentialing Program, with federal funding. After spending a year under the direct supervision of the Department of Health and Human Services, a successor to HEW, it moved to its present home with the non-profit Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, an ancillary organization associated with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in December of 1986 (Perry, 1990, p. 188; Bouverat and Galen).

When the first twelve CDAs were called forward to receive their credentials in June, 1975, the phases of the credentialing and assessment process included registration with the Consortium, formation of a Local Assessment Team (LAT), information collection and documentation by each of the four members of the team, a team meeting for evaluative purposes, transmittal of the documentation to the Consortium for review, and awarding of the credential. It has always been a requirement that the CDA credential be periodically renewed, (currently every five years), following the initial period of credentialing.

The Local Assessment Team (LAT)

The composition and responsibilities of the LAT is one of the most interesting parts of the early stages of the existence of the CDA credential. The team consisted of an Advisor, an early childhood professional with a college degree in early childhood education or child development. The Advisor observed the candidate working with children and completed three lengthy reports, which were brought to the LAT meeting. The candidate was an equal voting member of the team. The candidate prepared a portfolio documenting competency in all of the six competency areas and thirteen functional areas. [Insert competency charts about here] A parent/community representative had two tasks, collecting data from the parents or guardians of children currently in the candidate's care and observing in the candidate's preschool setting. All of the tabulated data was brought to the team meeting. The fourth member, the CDA Representative (CDA Rep.), was a trained early education professional, assigned by the national office, who conducted the team meeting and voting procedure according to strict guidelines set down by the Consortium. It was the CDA Rep's responsibility to ensure that the meeting exactly followed the procedures set down by the Consortium, in order that the validity and reliability of the system be maintained. CDA candidates in the system at that time were requested to take primary responsibility for the day-to-day activities of a group of children.

Although the CDA credentialing and assessment system was designed to provide an alternative to college-based preparation, it was intended "to bring up the floor, not lower the ceiling," (James L. Hymes, Jr. quoted in Gordon & Williams-Browne., 1995, p. 2). The CDA credential was not to be equivalent to an associate or a bachelor's degrees, but rather a credential signifying adequate competence to assume full responsibility for the care and education of young children (Powell& Dunn in Spodek & Saracho, 1990, p. 51, 52).

The Council Model

In 1990 the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition introduced the current Council Model for CDA, which made a number of sweeping changes. The Council Model separated CDA assessment and training into two separate systems, "one designed for

individuals who want only to have their skills evaluated and the other for individuals who wish to be trained" (Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 1989, p. 1). The direct assessment process requires candidates to have completed 120 clock hours of formal child care training within a five year period. No less than ten hours must be taken in each of the following eight areas: health and safety, child physical and intellectual development, support of child social and emotional development, productive relationships with families, effective program operation, professionalism, observation and recording of children's behavior, and principles of child growth and development. [Insert chart from Assessment and Competency Standards about here] The formal training experiences must be under the auspices of an agency or organization with expertise in early childhood teacher preparation. Examples of these organizations include community or junior colleges, four-year colleges and universities, vocational schools, Head Start programs, and local school districts. The educational requirements can also be met via participation in training experiences typically available in the field, such as in-service opportunities, workshops, and seminars sponsored by **recognized training providers**. The educational requirements are the same for all settings, with the exception of the home visitor credential (Graves, S. B., Gargiulo, R. M., & Sluder, L. C., 1996, p. 43-4).

Direct Assessment

The direct assessment system includes the candidate's preparation of a Professional Resource File, according to specific guidelines set forth by the Council; a written test, known as the Early Childhood Studies Review, administered by the Council Representative (Council Rep.); a formal observation of the candidate's performance with children by the advisor, using Council-developed observation instruments; and Parent Questionnaires collected by the candidate and submitted to the Council Rep. during the verification visit. The Council Rep. conducts an oral interview using a series of situation cards prepared by the Council. The Rep. evaluates the candidate using the specific guidelines presented during the Rep. training process. All documentation is sent to the Council for review of the candidate's documentation of competence and a decision regarding awarding of the credential. The new system of direct

assessment has moved the locus of control from the LAT, of which the both candidate and the CDA Rep. were a part, to the national Council committee. Although the previous system included Consortium review of the documentation and team meeting, if the team's decision was validated, the credential was awarded on the basis of the team's decision.

CDA P3

The CDA P3 model is a totally new design. It consists of several phases, including self-study of the Council's Essentials curriculum guide, work with an advisor approved by the Council, an intensive training seminar, and documentation and verification of performance. The third phase is similar to direct assessment, and includes candidate Resource File development, a formal observation by the advisor, the Early Childhood Studies Review, and an oral interview and verification of documentation by the Council Rep.

Critiques

There have been a number of critical reviews of the Child Development Associate Credential and the credentialing process over its twenty year history. One criticism "from the ranks of the professional educational establishment" has been "focused on the competency-based curriculum-teaching skills and their practice-and its emphasis on technical, practical and management concerns" at the expense of "liberal education" (Perry in Seefeldt, 1990, p. 195-6). Powell and Dunn (in Spodek & Saracho, 1990, p. 51) also cite issues of "quality control" regarding primary emphasis on performance over knowledge.

A second concern reported by Perry is that "the credential was driven by an overriding need to adapt to diversity and by political and economic concerns that catered to one segment of the potential teaching population" (p. 196). She argues that the "procedure of self-selection into CDA training" has led to training that does not specify any prerequisites regarding personal qualities, such as the ones advocated by Barbara Biber and her associates at the inception of the CDA system. Opponents of the CDA credentialing process have, from the beginning, expressed concern that child-care workers with less extensive preparation would replace professionals with a "more extended and valid 4-year program" (Perry in Seefeldt,

1990, p. 196). This does not appear to have happened, in part due to the fact that CDAs are viewed by many in hiring roles as entry-level professionals. Perry addresses the thorny problem of finding good models for CDA candidates to emulate and effective on-the-job supervision and training. Powell and Dunn concur, citing substandard training sites and experiences (in Spodek & Saracho, 1990, p. 51). This problem impacts upon college and university professional preparation programs, which are the providers of the degreed early education professionals who are sought as models and supervisors. Another problem which has engaged the early childhood education community for a long time is that of what level of mastery constitutes competence? This was a challenge to the CDA pioneers in the early 1970s and continues to pose a dilemma today. Individual trainers, advisors, LAT members, and Council Reps used and are using what Katz has termed their "best judgment" (Katz quoted in Perry, p. 196). The result is that CDAs are credentialed with varying degrees of competence.

Peters (in Spodek, B., Saracho, O. N., & Peters, D. L., 1988, p. 99-101) discusses three reasons "why the CDA credential falls far short in establishing a profession in the organizational sense." According to Peters, entry into the teaching profession is controlled by one or more governmental agencies. The CDA credential has been accepted by many states, but only for early childhood education positions which fall into the "paraprofessional" category. Since NAEYC took over responsibility for CDA, it has become more widely recognized nationally as a competency-based system endorsed and controlled by the profession itself. However, within NAEYC, and the profession as a whole, tensions regarding articulation among two and four year institutions of higher education and CDA remain, as exemplified by the following excerpt from an NAEYC publication.

> "Scene 2: Two years ago, my child was in Head Start. I volunteered at first, and then they offered me a paying job as an aide. I had a high school diploma. Then I earned a CDA Credential (CDA) through this new system that made it possible for me to earn some college credit at the same time. The CDA really boosted my confidence, so I'm ready to take the plunge into college so I can become a head teacher or director.
>
> This teacher may be about to encounter another barrier: CDA credits, which are competency-based, may or may not satisfy very many degree requirements, depending on the institution. Obtaining a CDA and a college degree are very difficult processes and may take more time and money than is available" (Hutchinson, B.L. in Johnson, J. & McCracken, J., 1994, p. 35).

Practices cited in recent discussions in the Early Childhood Listserve on the Internet (March, 1996), and the procedures of the author's own institution, limit credit awards to twelve semester hours for most CDAs.

One widely accepted criterion for a profession is a shared knowledge base. In recent years, great strides have been made in articulating a knowledge base for early childhood education in the United States. Peters wrote in 1988 that, "The CDA credentialing process is mute on this issue. No specific 'knowledge' test is required. ...Similarly, the only federal guidelines for CDA training programs are directed at the process, rather than the content, of the training" (p. 100). NAEYC and NCATE have spearheaded the move toward an articulated shared knowledge base for the early education field over the last five years. As discussed previously, the Council Model now requires a written assessment as a part of both the direct assessment and CDA P3 systems. Military child care has recently incorporated the CDA credentialing process at facilities all over the world. Their guidelines are directed at content as well as process.

Another weakness cited by Peters relates to the self-regulation aspect of the credentialing process. He states that a profession must have "an ongoing evaluation process for continuously monitoring professional performance. It requires (1) a set of ethical standards and basic operating procedures against which member performance can be measured and (2) the availability of meaningful sanctions for self-policing" (p. 101). The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, adopted in 1989, appears in full in the CDA Essentials document, along with the NAEYC Statement of Commitment. However, as stated by Peters, "maintenance of the CDA credential does require periodic update of materials but *does not* require a complete, standardized reassessment." (Emphasis added)

Two other "challenges" cited by Powell and Dunn (in Spodek & Saracho, 1990, p. 51) are confusion about the status of CDAs within the early childhood profession and the limited scope of the credential in non-Head Start settings, because it "has yet to be recognized as a credential that would make proprietary child care centers more attractive to consumer-parents." To some degree this challenge has been answered through the Academy Validation process by

which NAEYC accredits quality child care centers. As will be discussed in a later paragraph, the association of propriety child care providers has initiated its own credential, which it claims is superior to the CDA credential. In addition, such federal initiatives as the Job Training Partnership Act, demonstration grants to community colleges by Administration for Children, Youth and Families from 1987 to 1989, and the CDA scholarship act of 1986 have made the CDA credential more accessible to non-Head Start personnel.

CDA proponents have used data from available research studies in support of the program. Positive results of the CDA credentialing process reported in the research include: "an increased knowledge of child development, more positive attitudes towards children's learning, stronger and more coherent beliefs in a child-centered approach toward early education, an increase in educational aspirations and further professional development, more active seeking of educational opportunities, and an increased sense of self-confidence in one's abilities to handle the complexity of the job. ...there are at least some data to support the notion that CDA trained teachers are not different from those trained through a more traditional four-year-certification program, on some measured variables, and may be more effective in working with low-income parents" (Peters in Spodek, B., Saracho, O. N., & Peters, D. L., 1988, p. 99). Another example, citing a comparison of programs, the *National Day Care Study*, found that programs having a higher proportion of staff with child-related training produced children who developed better social relationships, were more likely to persist at projects, showed significant gains in knowledge and skills, talked more, and became more involved in general classroom activities. And, surprisingly, the study found that the general educational level of the staff was not as crucial as the amount of child-related training (Maxim, 1993, p. 19-20). Thus the *National Day Care Study* found the competencies to be significantly re ated to a child's performance on some developmental indices in the programs studied. However, there was also recognition by the CDA developers that competence cannot be totally represented by any finite set of behaviors, and when ascertaining teaching competence, consideration must be given to knowledge, skills, or attitudes less easily identified or measured objectively (Perry in Seefeldt, 1990, p. 189-90).

Other Non-traditionai Training Frameworks

Three non-traditional training frameworks preceded CDA. In Planned Variation Head Start and Follow Through programs, staff training was done by the developers of curriculum models during the 1970s. Paraprofessional training was representative of the 1960s concept of "career ladders." "Persons trained as auxiliary personnel, once hired, would be eligible to receive further training and education, enabling them to master the skills and knowledge necessary to move up through the ranks into teaching positions." (Perry, 1990, p. 181) Head Start Supplementary Training (HSST), college training leading to a certificate, associate or bachelor's degree, was funded by the federal government. In bringing the student to the college campus, HSST represented a more traditional route for education and professional improvement. This training program became the first nationwide effort of educational institutions to offer an alternative system for the preparation of early childhood teachers. Although supplementary training was only offered to Head Start staff, because it was conducted by university faculty, this training program influenced teacher-preparation programs generally (Perry, 1990, p. 184-5).

The Certified Childcare Professional (CCP) is a credential awarded by the National Child Care Association (NCCA), a "professional trade association of licensed private (proprietary) child care providers" (NCCA, p. 2). This credential is based on fifteen professional abilities. The assessment process includes a credentialing examination, development of a professional portfolio, a performance-based observational assessment, two parent evaluations, letters of endorsement from the center director and a colleague, two writing samples, stated plans for continued professional development, and a review by the NCCA Professional Standards Council. [See NCCA comparison chart with CDA]

Conclusion

Research by the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, and others, has demonstrated that the Child Development Associate Credential has created a cadre of competent, skilled educarers who provide knowledgeable care and education for young

children in quality programs. Some of the other non-traditional programs discussed have also added skilled child care workers to the profession. Progress has been made, however much work still remains to be done on the critical issues cited at professional meetings and in the professional literature in the United States.

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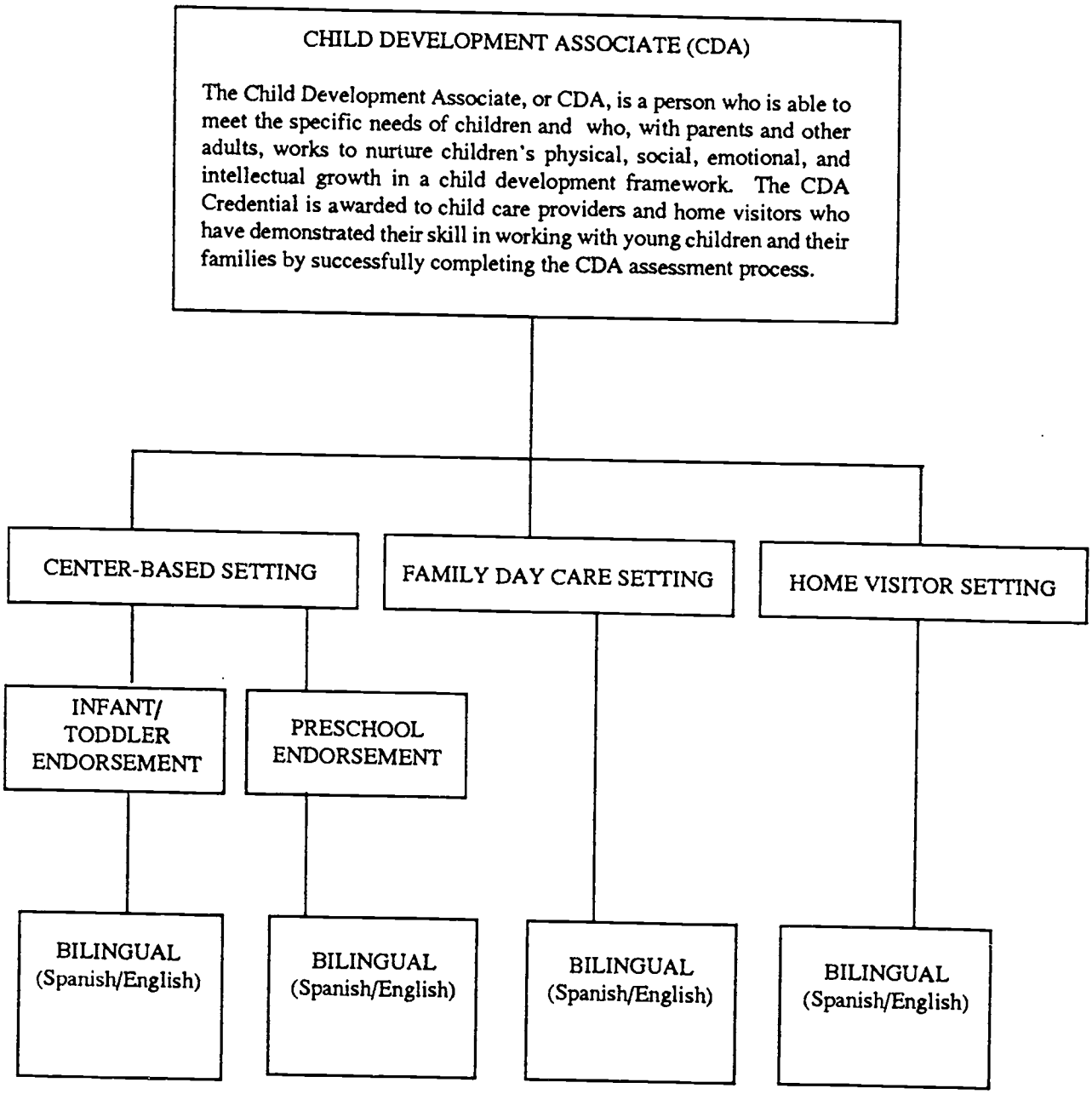
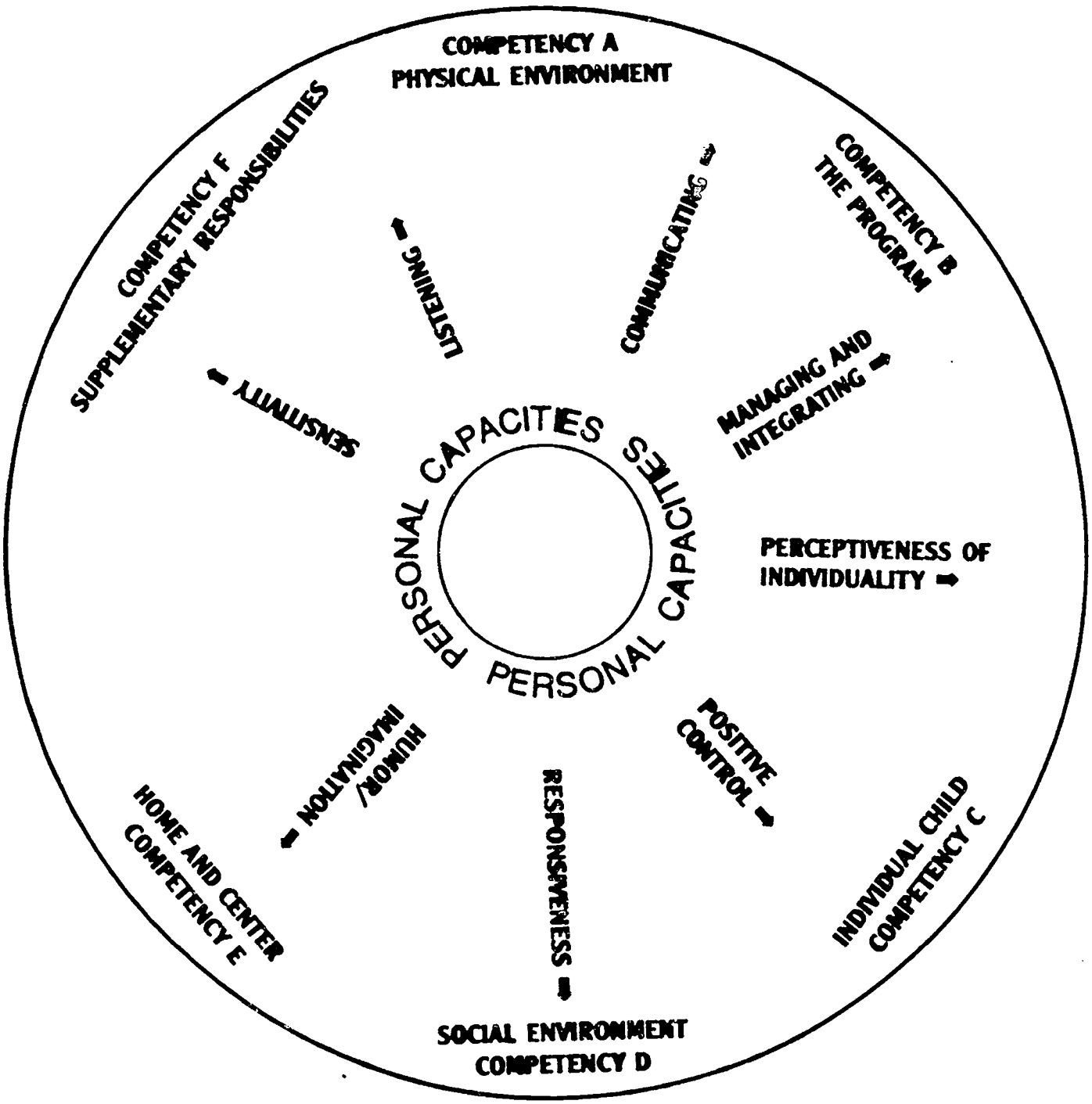
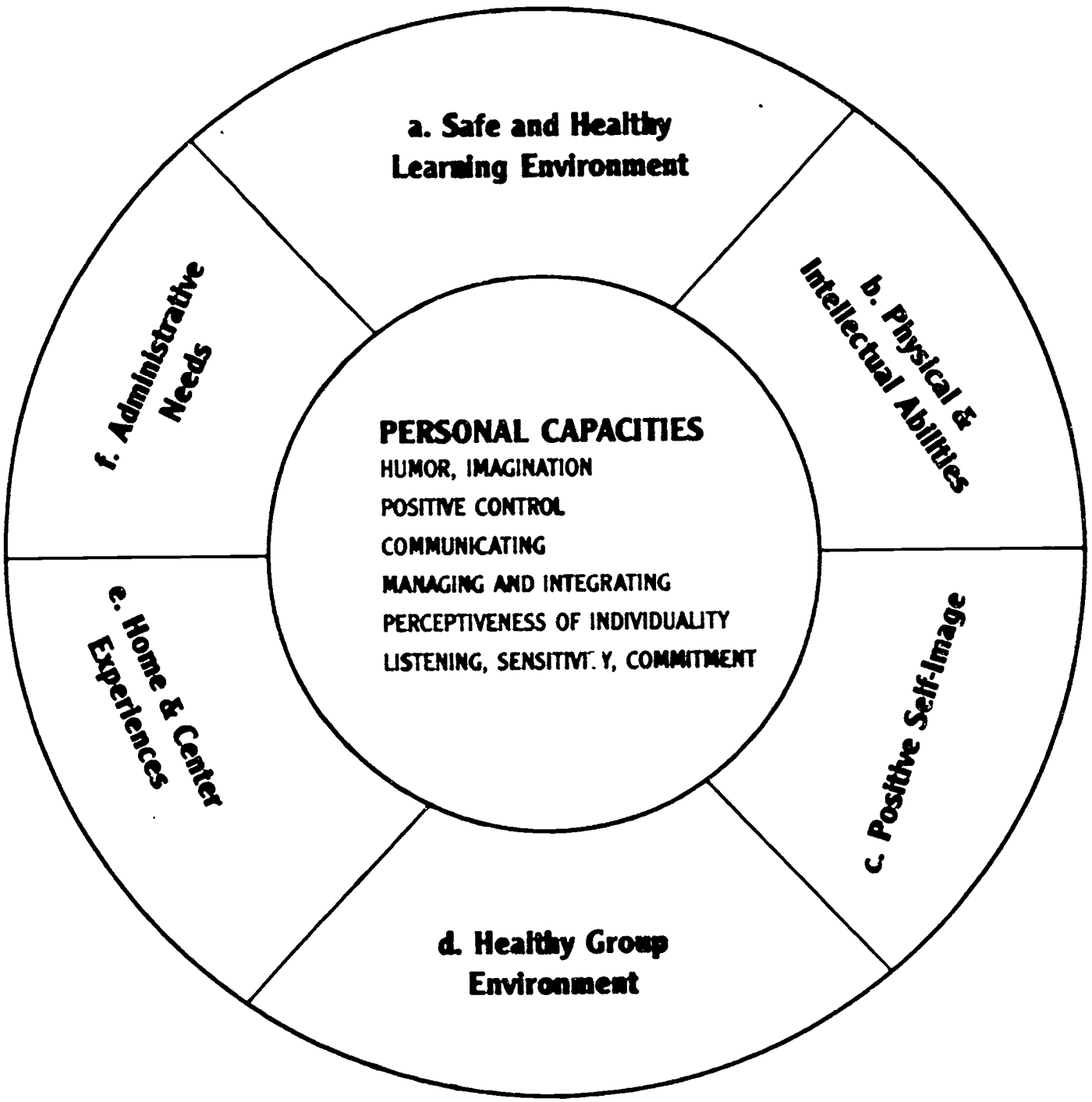
Figure 1: Options for CDA Assessment



A Graphic View of the CDA Competencies As a Basis for Appraisal



Competency Areas & Personal Capacities



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THE CONSORTIUM'S COMPETENCY STRUCTURE

DEFINITION OF THE CDA

The Child Development Associate or CDA is a person able to meet the specific needs of a group of children in a child-development setting by nurturing children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth, by establishing and maintaining a proper child-care environment and by promoting good relations between parents and the child-development center.

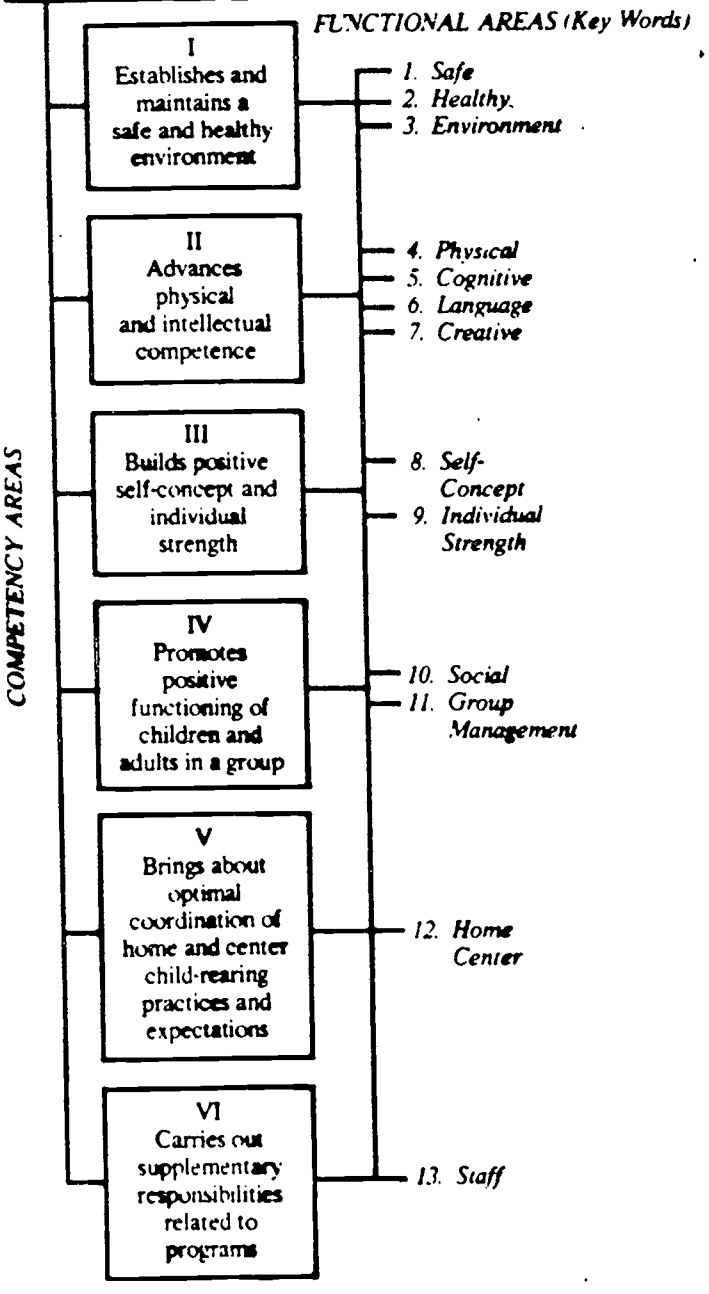

Table 1: CDA Competency Goals and Functional Areas

CDA COMPETENCY GOALS	FUNCTIONAL AREAS
I. To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment.	1. Safe: Candidate provides a safe environment to prevent and reduce injuries. 2. Healthy: Candidate promotes good health and nutrition and provides an environment that contributes to the prevention of illness. 3. Learning Environment: Candidate uses space, relationships, materials, and routines as resources for constructing an interesting, secure, and enjoyable environment that encourages play, exploration, and learning.
II. To advance physical and intellectual competence	4. Physical: Candidate provides a variety of equipment, activities, and opportunities to promote the physical development of children. 5. Cognitive: Candidate provides activities and opportunities that encourage curiosity, exploration, and problem solving appropriate to the developmental levels and learning styles of children. 6. Communication: Candidate actively communicates with children and provides opportunities and support for children to understand, acquire, and use verbal and nonverbal means of communicating thoughts and feelings. 7. Creative: Candidate provides opportunities that stimulate children to play with sound, rhythm, language, materials, space and ideas in individual ways and to express their creative abilities.
III. To support social and emotional development and provide positive guidance.	8. Self: Candidate provides physical and emotional security for each child and helps each child to know, accept and take pride in himself or herself and to develop a sense of independence. 9 Social: Candidate helps each child feel accepted in the group, helps children learn to communicate and get along with others, and encourages feelings of empathy and mutual respect among children and adults. 10. Guidance: Candidate provides a supportive environment in which children can begin to learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as a group.
IV. To establish positive and productive relationships with families.	11. Families: Candidate maintains an open, friendly, and cooperative relationship with each child's family, encourages their involvement in the program, and support the child's relationship with his or her family.
V. To ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs.	12. Program Management: Candidate is a manager who uses all available resources to ensure an effective operation. The Candidate is a competent organizer, planner, record keeper, communicator, and a cooperative coworker.
VI. To maintain a commitment to professionalism.	13. Professionalism: Candidate makes decisions based on knowledge of early childhood theories and practices. Candidate promotes quality in child care services. Candidate takes advantage of opportunities to improve competence, both for personal and professional growth and for the benefit of children and families.

D. *Education*

Candidates must have completed, within the past five (5) years, 120 clock hours of formal child care education, with no fewer than 10 hours in each of the following eight (8) subject areas. This requirement may be met through participation in the wide variety of training available in the field, including inservice and on-the-job experiences:

Subject Areas	Examples
1. Planning a safe, healthy learning environment	*Safety, first aid, health, nutrition, space planning, materials and equipment, play*
2. Steps to advance children's physical and intellectual development	*Large and small muscle, language, discovery, art, music*
3. Positive ways to support children's social and emotional development	*Self-esteem, independence, self-control, socialization*
4. Strategies to establish productive relationshps with families	*Parent involvement, home visits, conferences, referrals*
5. Strategies to manage an effective program operation	*Planning, record keeping, reporting*
6. Maintaining a commitment to professionalism	*Advocacy, ethical practices, work force issues, professional associations*
7. Observing and recording children's behavior	*Tools and strategies for objective information collection*
8. Principles of child growth and development	*Developmental milestones from birth through age 5, cultural influences on development*

All the formal education hours must be under the auspices of an agency or organization with expertise in early childhood teacher preparation. The education could be for college credit or for no credit.

A COMPARISON OF THE VERSUS THE CCP CREDENTIAL

REQUIREMENTS	CCP	CDA	CDA p3
Eligibility:	High School Diploma or Equivalent 18 years of age	Same	Same
Experience Requirements:	720 hours in a licensed center based program within five years	480 hours working with children within five years	Field Work
Educational Requirements:	180 clock hours/12 credit hours Education/training requirements are flexible and based on availability	120 clock hours Education/training requirements are flexible and based on availability	120 clock hours Curriculum Provided
Continuing Education:	20 clock hours of documented task focused training/education required every two years	Continuing Education Recommended	Continuing Ed Recommended
Portfolio:	Professional Development Portfolio	Professional Resource File	Professional Resource File
Oral Assessment:	None	Yes	Yes
Written Assessment:	National Child Care Credentialing Examination	Early Childhood Studies Review	Early Childhood Studies Review
Mentor:	Field Counselor appointed by NCCA after careful evaluation	Field Advisor selected by Candidate	Field Advisor selected by Candidate
Performance Observation:	Continuous and Ongoing	Periodic	Continuous and Ongoing
Outreach Evaluation:	Parents, Colleague, Center Directors, Writing Samples	Parents, Colleagues	Parents, Colleagues
Curriculum:	Flexible based on candidate need and local resources	Flexible based on candidate need & local resources	In House
Competency Evaluation:	15 Professional Ability Areas	13 Functional Areas	13 Functional Areas
Credential Validity:	2 Year Review; Renewal based on Continuing Education	3 Years, then 5 Year Renewal	3 Years, then 5 Year Renewal
Cost:	$300	$650	$1,500 *

*includes training