

The Child Development Professional™: Building on the Child Development Associate® to Advance Lead Teacher Competency and Promote Equitable Career Pathways

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Columbus, Ohio



A circular seal for Child Development Associates' 50th anniversary. The seal is dark green with a gold border. The text "Child Development Associates®" is at the top, "National Credentialing Program" is at the bottom, and "50 years" is in the center. The years "1975" and "2025" are on the left and right sides respectively.

ECE Competence & Practice Team



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About the Session

- In response to the need for a uniform workforce development system and to advance the professional growth of early childhood educators (ECE), leaders in the profession are championing an advanced national credential that builds on the theory and practice of the Child Development Associate® (CDA) and recognizes in-service training and work experience as academic credit.
- This session will introduce the concept of the proposed **Child Development Professional™ (CDP)** as an ECE *workforce solution* and engage participants in exploring benefits and opportunities.



Session Objectives

1. Analyze barriers to career advancement for early childhood educators.
2. Identify the benefits of an advanced national lead teacher credential and discuss recommendations to promote equity.
3. Explore the Child Development Professional™ (CDP) concept as a workforce solution and a certified pathway towards career advancement.



About the Council



MISSION

- The Council for Professional Recognition advances career pathways for early childhood educators through high-quality, competency-based credentialing.

VISION

- The Council for Professional Recognition envisions a society where all children learn and thrive in environments led by competent, valued early childhood educators.

The Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™



- In 1975, the first CDA® was awarded, setting the standards for competency-based early educator preparation.
- The Child Development Associate® (CDA) Credential™ or CDA® is **the most widely recognized, competency-based credential** in early childhood education.
- Today, leaders are championing an advanced national credential that builds on the theory and practice of the CDA®.



Best 1st Step

- Nationally Recognized
- Transferable
- Competency-Based

PONDER & SHARE

What obstacles do early educators face when working toward career advancement?



ECE Workforce Concerns

The ECE workforce is compensated at **lower rates than 97% of all professions.**

[2024 Early Childhood Workforce Index](#),
Center for the Study of Child Care Employment
(CSCCE) at UC Berkeley



ECE Workforce Data

Occupation

Median Hourly Wage

Childcare/preschool

\$13.07

*ranges \$10.60 in
Louisiana to \$18.23 in
District of Columbia*

Elementary-Middle School
Teacher

\$31.80

All Occupations

\$22.92

Variations

- Setting
- Funding stream
- Age of children (NOT staff qualifications)

- Educators in school-funded pre-K earn \$20,000+ more/yr than center-based with no public funding

- Center-based infant-toddler educators make \$8,000 less/yr than educators working with 3-5-year-olds in non-sponsored schools

[CSCCE\) at UC Berkeley](#)

Critical Needs

Barriers Preventing Equitable Access to Career & Educational Pathways

30% of center-based
and about 20% home-
based hold **bachelor's
degree** or higher

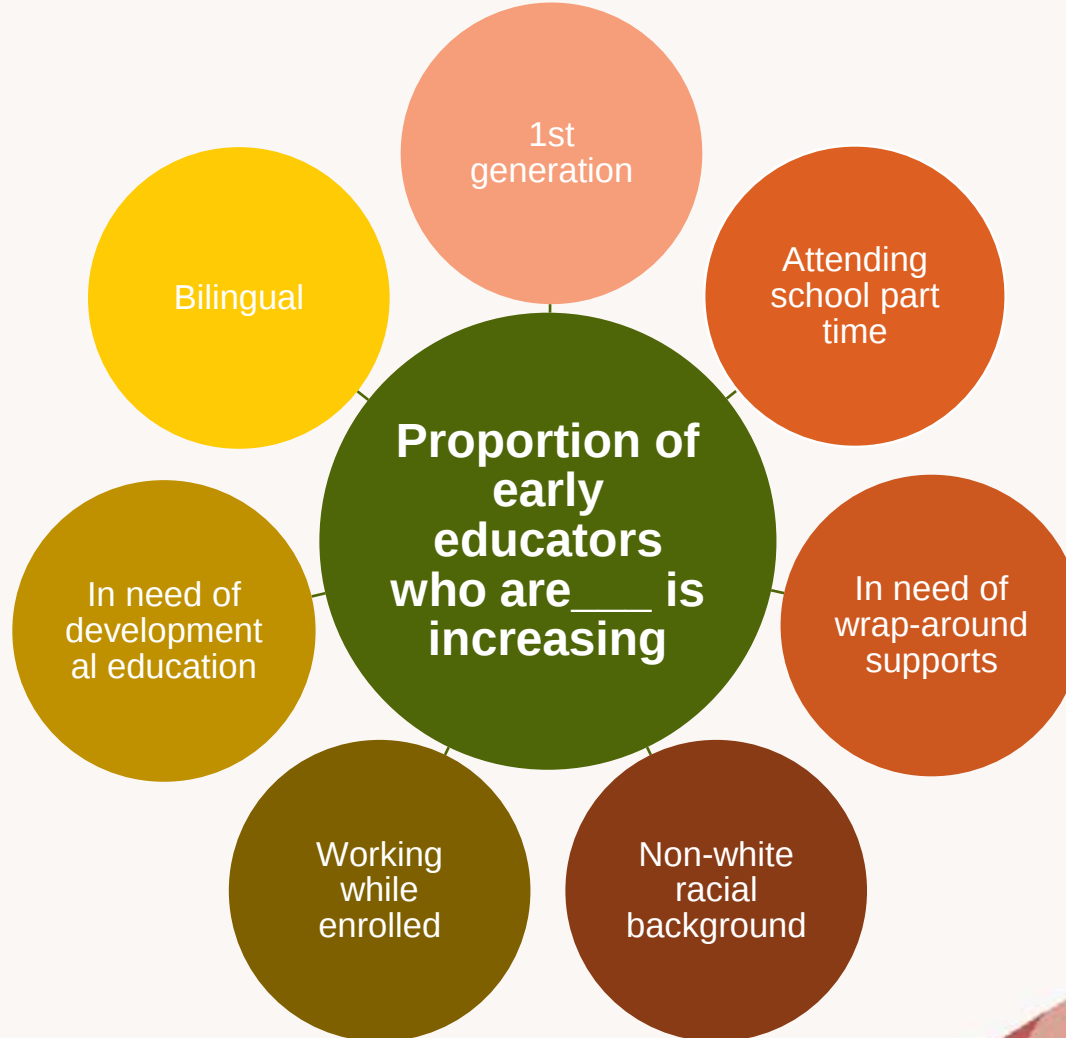
65% of ECE programs
experience **high
vacancies**

18% of center-based
and about 20% of
home-based hold an
associate degree

43% **staff turnover** rate
in birth-5 programs



Moving our Supports from Equality to Equity

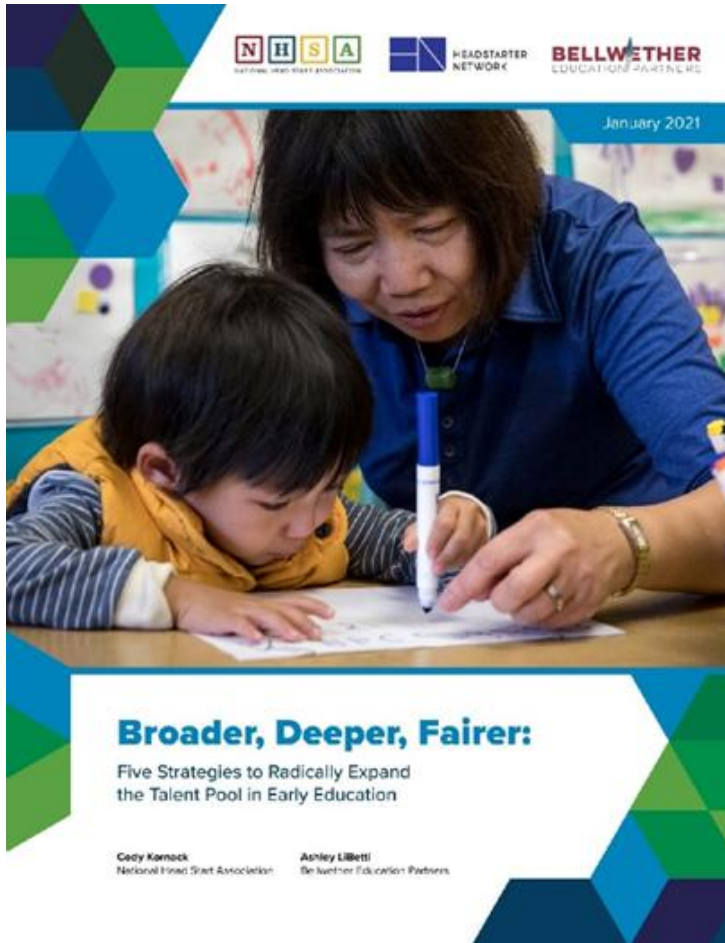


Broader, Deeper, Fairer Report

5 Strategies to Radically Expand the ECE Talent Pool

- Redefine credentials
- Create a second national credential that layers onto the CDA®
- Rethink degree attainment
- Optimize practice-based training
- Expand job-embedded coaching
- Connect in-service preparation with career advancement

[Report: Broader, Deeper, Fairer – NHSA](#) (2021)



National Lead Teacher Certification (NLTC)



Elevating the ECE Educator Workforce:

A Feasibility Study on the Viability of a National ECE Lead Teacher Certification

5 study findings underscoring the need to address compensation and equity concerns *before* proceeding with an NLTC system:

1. **Policy Actions:** Investment in the ECE workforce to remedy existing inequities - scholarships, loan forgiveness, tax credits, universal pay increases
2. **Higher Education Support:** Expand access to programs - alternative locations, class times...
3. **Innovative Financing:** Atypical funds – Medicaid, Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA)...
4. **ECE Employers:** Paid release time for professional development and higher education courses, high-quality practicum experiences, and apprenticeship programs
5. **Advocacy:** Greater public investment to increase compensation for the ECE workforce

Assessing the Feasibility of a National Lead Teacher Certification for Early Childhood Educators - Research for Action
(2021)

STUDY FUNDED BY:

EARLY EDUCATOR
INVESTMENT COLLABORATIVE

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for Professional Teaching Standards®



The Child Development Professional[™] Credential[™]:

Building on the Child Development Associate[®] to Advance Lead Teacher Competency and Promote Equitable Career Pathways

In 1971, a group of innovative early childhood educators gathered to discuss ways to improve the quality of early care and education in response to two primary challenges facing the field—the need for qualified staff working directly with young children in Head Start as the program expanded across the country and the need to improve overall program quality to influence positive outcomes for children and their families.¹ The concept for the Child Development Associate[®] (CDA) Credential[™] was born out of those meetings and initially funded by what was then called the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF).

In 1975, the first CDA[®] credential was awarded. From its inception, the CDA credentialing process was built upon a set of core competencies developed by early childhood education (ECE) professionals and child advocates. Over time, the field adopted this competency-based approach to early educator preparation.² Thriving in regulated, performance-based programs that promote school readiness, the CDA continues to validate the knowledge, skills and abilities of educators working in learning environments serving children from birth to age 5.

The early childhood education (ECE) profession continues to encounter challenges similar to those faced in the 1970s, which have been intensified by various social issues and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Despite recognizing early educators as essential workers during the peak of the pandemic, policymakers and families soon returned to heightened expectations for ECE programs to address long-standing gaps in educational, social-emotional, and developmental outcomes for young children. The field grapples with numerous difficulties related to maintaining high-quality program standards, ensuring appropriate staff qualifications, and providing trauma-informed care, all while striving to enhance practices that support all children and families effectively.

In response to the need for a uniform workforce development system and to advance the professional growth of early childhood educators, leaders in the ECE profession are championing an industry-specific national credential that builds on the theory and practice of the CDA and recognizes in-service training and work experience as academic credit.³ This paper proposes the Child Development Professional[™] (CDP) as a workforce solution to the current needs of the field, through the design and offering of an advanced nationally recognized competency-based Lead Teacher credential.

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1 Council for Professional Recognition. (2023). *Essential for Working with Young Children* (3rd ed.). Washington, DC.

2 Hirschman, B.L. (1991). The Child Development Associate[®]: Prototype for early childhood educators. *Educational Horizons*, 70(1), 41-46.

3 National Head Start Association & Bellwether Education Partners. (2021, January). "Broader, Deeper, Faster: Five Strategies to Radically Expand the Talent Pool in Early Education". <https://www.headstartnetwork.org/downloads/paper>

Announcing the Child Development Professional[™] (CDP) Concept:

The Best Next Step

Scan the
QR Codes to
Learn More

ENGLISH



SPANISH



Child Development Associate® (CDA) and Child Development Professional™ (CDP)

CDA®

A CDA® is an **entry-level educator** who has met the *CDA® Competency Standards* and is either starting a career in early childhood education or professionalizing their career with the goal of working as a Lead Teacher.

For each CDA® competency goal, the CDA® demonstrates knowledge and skills in performing work with young children and families in the role of a teacher.

CDP™

A CDP™ is an **experienced educator** or leader who has earned the CDA® credential and mastered the *CDA® Competency Standards* with the goal of supporting the professional advancement of other practitioners.

The CDP™ understands the art and science of teaching, has mastered the role of Lead Teacher and guides, supports, and advocates for the professional advancement of practitioners along with the continuous quality improvement of the program.



CDA® Subject Areas: Theory & Practice



#	CDA® SUBJECT AREAS	EXAMPLES
1	Planning a safe and healthy learning environment	Safety, first aid, health, nutrition, space planning, materials and equipment, play
2	Advancing children's physical and intellectual development	Large and small muscle, language and literacy, discovery, art, music, mathematics, social studies, science, technology, and dual language learning
3	Supporting children's social and emotional development	Adult modeling, self-esteem, self-regulation, socialization, cultural identity, conflict resolution
4	Building productive relationships with families	Parent involvement, home visits, conferences, referrals, communication strategies
5	Managing an effective program	Planning, recordkeeping, reporting, community services
6	Maintaining a commitment to professionalism	Advocacy, ethical practices, workforce issues, professional development, goal setting, networking
7	Observing and recording children's behavior	Tools and strategies for objective observation and assessment of children's behavior and learning to plan curriculum and individualize teaching, developmental delays, intervention strategies, individual education plans
8	Understanding principles of child development and learning	Typical developmental expectations for children from birth through age 5, individual variation including children with disabilities, cultural influences on development, an understanding of early brain development

CDA® Competency Standards: Demonstration & Assessment



#	CDA® Competency Goals	Functional Areas
Goal I	To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment	1. Safe 2. Healthy 3. Learning Environment
Goal II	To advance physical and intellectual competence	4. Physical 5. Cognitive 6. Communication 7. Creative
Goal III	To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance	8. Self 9. Social 10. Guidance
Goal IV	To establish positive and productive relationships with families	11. Families
Goal V	To ensure a well-run, purposeful program responsive to participant needs	12. Program Management
Goal VI	To maintain a commitment to professionalism	13. Professionalism

Highlights: The CDP™ Concept



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- A **workforce solution** validating Lead Teacher competency
- Nationally recognized certification pathway, building on the CDA® - “**National Lead Teacher Certification**”
- Designed for CDAs who have mastered the CDA® *Competency Standards*
- Promotes equitable access to professional/career advancement
- Requires higher levels of practice-based competencies
- CDA® is the *Best First Step*. CDP™ is the *Best Next Step*.

CDP™ EXPECTATIONS



What criteria would you expect the CDP™ to require to demonstrate *advanced* competency?

Reflect on standards for:

- Education
- Work experience
- Assessment/evaluation

Preparing for the CDP™



- In alignment with our history, specific eligibility requirements to be determined based on data acquired from the ECE field.
- General timeline from concept to credentialing – 9 months.
- The Council will preserve and support access to all career level choices, including continuation of CDA® renewal for professionals who want to maintain the CDA® credential.



RESOURCES

CDA® Competency Standards Books



- Each book provides a CDA® candidate with everything they need to prepare and apply for the CDA® credential, including:
- **Detailed instructions** about the CDA® credentialing process, verification visit™ and exam
- **Specifications** for the *CDA® Professional Portfolio*
- **CDA® Application and required forms**, such as family questionnaires and the official Comprehensive Scoring Instrument (CSI)





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Learn More & Join Here:
councilcan.org



Join us in CAN for Café Q&A

Quarterly engagements with ECE Competence and Practice team



Closing Remarks and Next Steps



Read our Blog – “Announcing the Child Development Professional™ (CDP) Concept: The Best Next Step”



Participate in stakeholder meetings and webinars



Join and engage via CAN: Council Alumni Network



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