



Early Childhood Education Model of Success
Montgomery College
Germantown, Rockville, and Takoma Park/Silver Spring, MD
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Supporting Professional Development in the Early Childhood Community

In 2008, the Montgomery College Associate of Applied Sciences in Early Childhood program was accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). As we earned and now maintain this accreditation, we have also been awarded funding annually through our local Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Grant, allowing us to provide a range of resources for our students and our local early childhood community.

As we work toward enhancing the professionalism of the field, and supporting the ongoing professional development of both pre-service and in-service teachers, we find that a variety of approaches is needed to reach out to those who would benefit. In many instances, child care providers have obtained their credentials through training programs but are hesitant to enroll in college level coursework, so providing safe avenues to enter the higher education world can be critical.

An example of our successful cooperation with the local early childhood community is our biannual Early Childhood Education Career Program Fair (held for the third time in April 2011). We offer nine different workshops for training hours, hold a student academic exhibit, sponsor advising sessions, and offer a recruitment fair, all at no cost to the attendees thanks to the Perkins funding. Over 200 students and local child care providers participate in the workshops and special events each time the event is held. Our faculty members present the sessions, and our students display projects created in the courses they are taking; feedback shows that many local child care providers feel this experience gave them encouragement to take credit level education courses at Montgomery College.

Since the fall semester of 2009, we have offered a nine-credit program in early childhood leadership and management. This unique program addresses the NAEYC accreditation requirement that early childhood administrators need nine college credits in administration, leadership, and management. The program

also fulfills the leadership requirement for the Maryland State Department of Education child care program accreditation. Upon successful completion of this program, students receive a Letter of Recognition from Montgomery College; thus far we have helped more than 30 students to meet the accreditation requirements.

A powerful tool in designing, planning and implementing each of these activities has been our local Cluster Advisory Board for Training and Child Studies, which meets regularly to gather key stakeholders in our community. Included in this advisory board membership are representatives from a wide range of institutions: the local public school system; local universities who offer transfer programs in early childhood education; child development teachers; child care center directors and administrators; the local Child Care Resource and Referral Center; and of course our own program graduates and faculty members. The synergy created by sharing the ideas, knowledge and skills in this assembled group keeps us moving forward in recruiting and training a better educated, more effective early care profession.

Of course, once we get the students on campus, the quality of the teaching/learning environment is critical. In the fall of 2011, the Germantown campus of Montgomery College opened a new early childhood education model classroom, mirroring one already available at our Rockville campus to offer students a unique setting in which to prepare for the early childhood education profession. Supported by Perkins funding, the model classroom is complete with equipment and supplies found in early learning programs that serve children ranging from birth to age eight. It provides the students a unique opportunity to learn in a more hands-on and concrete manner. Students are able to implement what they learn in the classroom with projects such as designing a classroom for a specific age group, in which they must determine what toys and equipment are developmentally appropriate for that environment. In another example, students use the equipment to design activities that promote specific domains of development. This exciting and innovative model of program provides the students with more meaningful learning and better prepares them for the early childhood education profession, both in the Pre-K setting and for early elementary school.

With appropriate funding support, these components could be part of any community college early childhood program, helping to form a cohesive and sustainable professional development environment for early care educators, and supporting your local professional community.