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I. Introduction

In Mecklenburg County, there are more than 57,000 children ages birth to five. More than half of these children live in homes in which all adults present are working. These families rely on a patchwork of arrangements, including familial, formal and informal early care and education settings, which significantly influences their children’s early learning experiences.

Research clearly indicates the link that exists between the quality of early care and education for children (0-5) and children’s success in kindergarten and beyond. The higher the quality, the greater the likelihood that children will experience scholastic success and develop into productive members of society (Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Study, 1995; The Carolina Abecedarian Project, 1999; High/Scope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 27, 1993).

Yet at local, state, and national levels, we have yet to develop a system of early care and education which adequately ensures a child’s well-being and maximizes this critical period of growth and development. Families in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, as elsewhere across the state, struggle to find early care and education for their children which is both affordable and of high quality. Because our early care and education system is largely based on what families of young children can afford to pay, rather than on what quality programming costs, it is a system that struggles to achieve and sustain quality.

As a result, the early care and education industry, and especially its child care segment, is typified by inadequate compensation, resulting in ongoing problems in recruiting and retaining well-trained and well-educated professionals. This is a dilemma that early childhood experts, community planners, practitioners and parents have grappled with for years.

Historically, North Carolina has had one of the largest percentages of working women in the nation and, at the same time, has been a low wage state. Within such realities, the child care system and its regulations evolved to fit a constrained purse.

The advent of Smart Start has led to improvements in early care and education statewide, enabling regulatory reform of a system that historically has been regarded as ranking in the bottom half of our nation’s states in terms of quality.

In 1999 the North Carolina Division of Child Development instituted a new “star rated” licensing system to replace the longstanding A/AA licensing system. This new system is based on the number of points a program can achieve in three categories: 1) program standards, 2) staff education and 3) compliance history. Child care centers and family child care homes that operate at
minimum licensing standards will receive one star, and those that voluntarily exceed the minimum will receive a rating from two to five stars based upon the licensing criteria.

The new star rated system is beginning to move child care in the right direction. As a result of the star ratings, consumers will have the opportunity to better evaluate the quality of early care and education programs and will begin to demand higher quality programs. Program operators will also have a more objective measure of their programs’ quality and a sense of where to invest limited resources to achieve quality improvement. However, it does not go far enough to guarantee the level of quality needed to fully develop young children. The State’s minimum licensing standards do not demand or ensure that those working in the field have the necessary qualifications to provide and sustain a high level of quality care and education.

While many highly skilled early childhood professionals work in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and continue to grow professionally, there are others who need to expand their knowledge and skill base to more effectively nurture young children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive growth. For many programs, the educational attainment of staff is a primary barrier to moving toward higher star ratings.

As of May 2001, approximately 82% of the licensed centers serving children ages birth to five in Charlotte-Mecklenburg received ratings of 3 stars or less, “average” at best on a licensing scale in which “average” is widely regarded as inadequate quality. Approximately 83% of the licensed center-based slots available to Mecklenburg County families are provided by these centers. This level of quality is unacceptable, particularly for a county as progressive and economically prosperous as Mecklenburg. Charlotte-Mecklenburg can and should do a better job.

Raising the qualifications and skill levels of those working with young children is difficult when, on average, early childhood professionals receive few, if any, benefits and earn only $6 to $10 an hour — less than most butchers, manicurists, cafeteria cooks or hospital orderlies. There is little incentive to enter the field, or for those in the field, to pursue advanced education or other professional development opportunities.

Inadequate compensation leads to extremely high staff turnover. As estimated by NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) and other advocacy organizations, nationally the average annual staff turnover rate for early care and education centers is an alarming 40%. According to Smart Start of Mecklenburg County’s 2000 Child Care Workforce Study, turnover in Mecklenburg centers for the previous year was 25% for lead teachers and 51% for assistant teachers. Because continuity of care is a critical quality indicator, this rate is of particular concern — children do not thrive in an environment in which they are unable to form enduring bonds with their primary caregivers.
If the early care and education system is to meet and sustain a high level of quality, compensation issues must be addressed. However, there are other challenges as well. These include:

- building the will of the local early childhood community to expect and demand higher standards for the profession — exceeding those required by licensing;

- overcoming the pervasive view of child care practitioners as “babysitters” — a perception that undermines the profession and perpetuates an inferior image;

- reducing the fragmentation of the existing early care and education professional development system;

- creating more opportunities for early childhood professionals to be guided into a career path, earn college credit for their professional development experiences, and attain higher levels of education and expertise;

- addressing the early care and education needs of Mecklenburg’s expanding multicultural, multilingual population and recruiting a diverse workforce;

- ensuring that professional development instruction and curricula are of high quality and relevant to practitioner needs;

- breaking down barriers that hinder the professional growth and development of those working in the early care and education field (e.g. time, access, language, motivation and communication);

- bridging the perceived gap between the professionalism of those who work in family child care home settings and those who work in centers and other early education programs; and

- getting the community — parents, educators, employers, and community leaders — to recognize the value of quality early care and education for all children ages birth to five and the need to support the early childhood profession’s growth and development.

Local early childhood advocates have long recognized the need for a comprehensive, collaborative approach that shapes and structures professional development to improve quality care and education and helps early childhood professionals advance in the field. Effecting change and promoting growth in the early childhood profession will require a concentrated, coordinated effort with broad community support.
As part of its application for 1999-2000 United Way funding, Child Care Resources Inc. (CCRI) committed resources to identifying and assessing local early childhood professional development needs and gaps. The need for this work was reinforced in the Blueprint for Children Report (2000), a document outlining a comprehensive, community-wide agenda for children ages birth to five. Prepared as part of a collaborative community effort, the Blueprint recommended completion of a professional development plan as a key strategy for improving the quality of care and education in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Under the leadership of CCRI, professional development assessment and planning began in February 2000. A 22-member committee was formed to build consensus on major professional development issues, articulate goals and develop the plan. This diverse committee of early care and education practitioners, directors, trainers, licensing consultants, health care educators and others in the field met over the course of five months. In addition, focus groups of the following constituencies provided broad input:

- Directors of early care and education centers
- Experienced teachers
- Parents of small children
- 2nd year students enrolled in CPCC’s Early Childhood Associate Program
- 4th year students enrolled in UNCC’s Child and Family Development Bachelor of Arts Degree program
- Operators/owners of family child care homes and centers located in a residence
- CCRI trainers
- Other trainers/educators working in the community

Focus group participants were asked to identify what they considered to be the core knowledge and skills needed by assistant and lead teachers and directors of centers and/or family child care homes. They were also asked to identify barriers to, and gaps within, current professional development and to suggest solutions. These meetings proved to be invaluable, with “real world” experiences confirming issues and suggesting potential strategies.
This professional development plan articulates a vision for the advancement of the early care and education field in Charlotte-Mecklenburg over the next three to five years. It also provides strategies for implementation while recognizing that in order for implementation to occur, adequate funding must be secured. The plan is intended to motivate the local early childhood profession to exceed "average" and to become active participants in local quality improvement efforts.

The suggested plan relies on the voluntary participation of the early childhood profession. It does not impose rules and regulations. It supports the licensing system by putting into place the coordinated and articulated early childhood professional development “infrastructure” needed to improve the practice of early care and education and move programs toward higher quality.

As the largest practitioner community in the state, Charlotte-Mecklenburg is positioned to inform the development of higher quality and improved professionalism at both local and state levels.
II. Vision and Goals for Professional Development

Local child care advocates and practitioners envision that all young children in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, not just those who can afford it, will have access to quality early care and education. Recognizing the direct correlation between quality care and education programs and the knowledge and skill levels of early childhood professionals, the following vision statement was adopted by the plan's contributors:

A Local Vision for the Early Childhood Profession

All early childhood professionals employed in Charlotte-Mecklenburg possess and continue to develop the necessary skills, knowledge and education required to provide high quality, developmentally appropriate learning experiences for all children enrolled in early care and education programs. Those working with and for children consider themselves to be highly skilled “professionals” and receive compensation commensurate with their responsibilities, qualifications and competence.

As a result, turnover rates have declined; the profession is both well-regarded and valued; and the field attracts and retains motivated, skilled individuals who are effective advocates for the continuous improvement of early childhood programs and services.
Realizing the Vision... A Challenging Task

This vision will not be realized immediately. It is ambitious, challenging those working toward its implementation to be creative and resourceful. If fundamental change is to occur and the profession is to improve as a whole, a comprehensive, holistic approach to professional development must be pursued.

Three major goals must be accomplished over the next several years to successfully “grow” the profession in alignment with this vision. The early childhood profession must 1) increase compensation (both wages and benefits) to better correspond to job responsibilities, educational attainment and experience in order to stabilize the profession; 2) foster a greater sense of professionalism among practitioners and engender community respect and support for the field; and 3) create a coordinated, articulated and high quality early care and education professional development system. These goals are interdependent and must be pursued concurrently:

Our Vision

Skilled, knowledgeable and qualified professionals providing high quality, developmentally appropriate learning experiences for ALL children enrolled in Charlotte-Mecklenburg early care and education programs.

Goal 1
Increase compensation - wages and benefits - of early childhood professionals to more appropriately correspond to job responsibilities, educational attainment and experience in order to stabilize the profession and improve recruitment, retention, diversity and workforce quality.

Goal 2
Foster greater professionalism among practitioners and significantly enhance the image of, and community respect and support for, the profession as a whole.

Goal 3
Create and operate a well-coordinated, articulated, and outcomes-oriented career development system that is accessible; promotes high quality standards; builds on a clearly defined career lattice; provides diverse, high quality and relevant professional development opportunities; and offers ongoing, effective support.
III. Plan of Action

Objectives and Strategies

The first course of action in designing this professional development plan was to determine where the early childhood profession should and could be five years from now and to identify viable strategies. The following “plan of action,” with key objectives and implementation was developed. An overview of the issue and challenges related to each of the goals is provided as part of the background discussion.

VISION/GOAL 1:
appropriately and equitably compensated workforce

Increase compensation—wages and benefits—of early childhood professionals to more appropriately correspond to job responsibilities, educational attainment and experience in order to help stabilize the profession and improve recruitment, retention, diversity and workforce quality.

Background

Early childhood has long been one of the most poorly compensated professions. Until this issue is addressed, the profession’s growth and development will be stymied. With entry-level wages often not far above minimum wage and little growth opportunity for experienced professionals, the field’s workforce is defined and plagued by its “revolving door.” It is not surprising that many in the field do not actively seek professional growth and development opportunities—there is little financial or career advancement reward to do so.

Low unemployment—around 2.9% in Mecklenburg County (February 2001 Civilian Labor Force Estimates for North Carolina Counties)—compounds the problem. The lack of workers to fill positions in all sectors of the economy creates a job seeker’s market. It is ironic to note that wages earned by those who butcher meat, work in beauty salons, and tend to animals are greater than wages earned by those who provide care and education to preschool children.
## Child Care Workforce Earnings in Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Mecklenburg County Average Hourly Wage</th>
<th>Est. Hourly Entry Level Wage (1)</th>
<th>Est. Hourly Experienced Level Wage (2)</th>
<th>State Average Hourly Wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School Teacher</td>
<td>$16.60</td>
<td>$12.33</td>
<td>$17.90</td>
<td>$15.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten Teacher</td>
<td>$13.31</td>
<td>$10.30</td>
<td>$14.80</td>
<td>$14.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manicurist</td>
<td>$11.48</td>
<td>$7.70</td>
<td>$13.33</td>
<td>$7.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Technician</td>
<td>$10.72</td>
<td>$8.80</td>
<td>$11.67</td>
<td>$9.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>$10.37</td>
<td>$8.19</td>
<td>$11.44</td>
<td>$10.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Teacher (3)</td>
<td>$9.21</td>
<td>$6.31</td>
<td>$10.63</td>
<td>$8.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary School Teacher's Aide</td>
<td>$9.08</td>
<td>$7.55</td>
<td>$9.84</td>
<td>$7.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital Orderly</td>
<td>$8.78</td>
<td>$7.43</td>
<td>$9.45</td>
<td>$7.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafeteria Cook</td>
<td>$8.23</td>
<td>$7.42</td>
<td>$8.63</td>
<td>$7.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Worker (4)</td>
<td>$7.70</td>
<td>$6.20</td>
<td>$8.43</td>
<td>$6.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) The entry wage is the mean of the first third of the wage distribution.

(2) The experienced wage is the mean of the upper two-thirds of the wage distribution.

Note: For those employers who reported wages as an annual salary, the hourly wage is an approximation based on the division of annual salary by 2,080 hours.

(3) PRESCHOOL TEACHERS: Instruct children (normally up to 5 years of age) in activities designed to promote social, physical, and intellectual growth needed for primary school in preschool, day care center, or other child development facility. May be required to hold State certification. [This occupation was added in 1994 as a disaggregation of occupation 31302 TEACHERS, PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN.]

(4) CHILD CARE WORKERS: Attend to children at child care centers, schools, businesses, and institutions. Perform variety of tasks such as dressing, feeding, bathing, and overseeing play. Exclude Preschool Teachers and Teacher Aides.

* Data were prepared from the 1998 Occupational Employment Statistics combined wage file. These data represent wages across all industries. Wages within a given industry may vary.
Low wages in the profession are directly related to the desire and need to keep early care and education affordable for families. Because the cost of early care and education is borne largely by parents during their early earning years, the amount that can be charged for tuition is limited. Child Care Resources reports that, on average, families in Charlotte-Mecklenburg pay approximately $6,000 a year per child, or $115 a week, for full-time, year-round child care for birth to five-year-old children. For school-age children, families pay approximately $90 a week for full-time child care. The U.S. Department of Labor recommends that families pay no more than 10% of their income for child care. However, in many cases, families pay over 20% of their total income and cannot afford to pay more. To keep early care and education programs affordable, centers and family child care homes hold costs down, including the wages of those working in the field.

### Average Cost of Full Time Child Care in Mecklenburg County*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Family Child Care Homes (FCCH) Weekly Cost</th>
<th>Average Annual FCCH Cost</th>
<th>Percent of annual income spent on child care for one child</th>
<th>Child Care Centers Weekly Cost</th>
<th>Average Annual Child Care Centers Cost</th>
<th>Percent of annual income spent on child care for one child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant</td>
<td>$110</td>
<td>$5,720</td>
<td>21.22%</td>
<td>$134</td>
<td>$6,968</td>
<td>25.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddler</td>
<td>$107</td>
<td>$5,564</td>
<td>20.64%</td>
<td>$130</td>
<td>$6,760</td>
<td>25.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years old</td>
<td>$104</td>
<td>$5,408</td>
<td>20.06%</td>
<td>$123</td>
<td>$6,396</td>
<td>23.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4 years old</td>
<td>$101</td>
<td>$5,252</td>
<td>19.48%</td>
<td>$117</td>
<td>$6,084</td>
<td>22.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years old</td>
<td>$98</td>
<td>$5,096</td>
<td>18.90%</td>
<td>$114</td>
<td>$5,928</td>
<td>21.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-age</td>
<td>$90</td>
<td>$4,680</td>
<td>17.36%</td>
<td>$99</td>
<td>$5,148</td>
<td>19.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to CCRI's provider database, the average annual cost of child care in Mecklenburg County is as follows:

- Family child care for 0-5 year old children: $5,408
- Center-based care for 0-5 year old children: $6,427
- School-age child care: $4,914

*Based on annual income of $25,957 (monthly income needed for a family of one parent, one infant and one preschool child as reported by the North Carolina Child Advocacy Institute - Knowledge Exchange 1996)

Source: Child Care Resources Inc. as of December 31, 2000
Objective 1.1 Increase Wages and Benefits for the Early Care and Education Workforce

The need to maintain affordability while increasing workforce compensation presents a tremendous challenge. On the national level, significant attention is being focused on the financing of a high quality system of early care and education (including compensation and professional development costs). The current system is financed primarily by parents who cannot afford the cost of quality and by subsidies that are based on market rates (determined by what parents can afford to pay). These sources provide insufficient funding to achieve and sustain quality. It is time to examine alternative financing strategies which have been successfully employed by other systems (e.g., housing, transportation, health insurance, and higher education), applying lessons learned to maximize business, non-profit, philanthropic, government and other private sector investment in early education. Financing strategies should apply what has been learned from public policy in other fields (as summarized in Looking Into New Mirrors: Lessons for Early Childhood Finance and System Building by Louise Stoney):

- Government subsidies are made available to families at all income levels (e.g., home mortgage tax deductions, support for higher education, transportation subsidies to keep fares low).

- Programs or projects may receive direct financial assistance, in addition to the portable aid that is offered to individuals and families (e.g., housing, higher education and transportation).

- Public support is viewed as economic development, not charity (e.g., housing, transportation, higher education).

- The private sector (individuals as well as proprietary and non-profit institutions) has been encouraged to invest in publicly supported industries, and therefore can be an active partner in financing and maintaining a high quality service delivery system (e.g., housing, managed care, transportation funds for infrastructure, lending institutions for loans).

Strategy 1.1a Establish an Early Care and Education Financing Task Force

With its extensive expertise, Charlotte's finance and investment community could provide the necessary leadership to address this dilemma. Child Care Resources Inc. has long supported the development of a financing strategy task force for early care and education quality improvements. More recently, the local Blueprint for Children report also called for the employment of such a strategy. When a financing task force is formed, the vision and goals articulated in this professional development plan should be incorporated into the cost analysis of a stronger system.
Strategy 1.1b. Increase Access to Insurance/Retirement Benefits
Insurance and retirement benefits currently are deficient or non-existent for many early childhood professionals. In order to access more affordable coverage, benefit options such as the TEACH insurance program, North Carolina Cares, and the establishment of a benefit trust should be promoted.

Strategy 1.1c. Mobilize Early Childhood Professionals
Unite the field in the efforts to increase compensation and benefits by: (1) encouraging membership in the Center for the Child Care Work Force and sharing its publications (Creating Better Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards for Teaching Staff in Center Based Child Care and Creating Better Family Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards); 2) promoting Worthy Wage Day to increase public awareness and highlight workforce challenges; and 3) educating administrators and program owners about the cost of turnover vs. investment in higher salaries.

Strategy 1.1d. Explore the Feasibility of Adapting Other States’ Initiatives for Financing Early Care and Education and Professional Development
Obtain additional information from successful initiatives (e.g., California Cares, Washington State Child Care Career and Wage Ladder, Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance, and “Invest in the Children” License Plate, Massachusetts) and explore ways to implement them in Mecklenburg County.

Strategy 1.1e. Solicit Business and Community Support
Seek business and government support to help promote and/or finance early care and education professional development and recruitment.

Strategy 1.1f. Reactivate and Expand Corporate Champions
Engage the broader employer community in developing strategies to better address the professional development needs of the field.

Strategy 1.1g. Initiate a JobLink Center Connection
Work with the local JobLink system to identify ways JobLink Centers can promote the early childhood profession and provide job seekers with referrals to community resources for training and employment.

Strategy 1.1h. Increase the Diversity of the Field
Accelerate efforts to identify, recruit and adequately compensate potential practitioners with diverse cultural and language backgrounds in order to better reflect and support Mecklenburg’s increasingly diverse and international population. Identify and provide appropriate resources and training.

Strategy 1.1i. Increase Community Awareness of Workforce Challenges
Promote targeted media focus on professional development and compensation issues as well as proposed corrective strategies.
**Background**

The early childhood profession has been plagued for years by a poor image. Parents and others often view those who work in child care centers and homes as “babysitters,” not as professionals. Even some who work in the field consider themselves as such. Consequently, many practitioners interact on a daily basis with people who show little respect for them and/or their work. This lack of respect tends to undermine self-esteem and contributes to inequities in compensation and high turnover. In addition, media attention to early care and education issues too frequently focuses on the negative, thus perpetuating negative images.

A shift in the perception of the profession will not originate from outside the field. It must come from both the individual practitioner and the profession as a whole. The profession must begin to see itself as legitimate and important — one that helps shape, develop and educate young children during the critical early years. Individuals working in the profession must share the responsibility for changing the image. One step is to build awareness that early care and education is a profession, and like such professions as medicine, social work and law, adheres to a body of knowledge and field of study unique to the profession and that assures a level of competency for its practitioners.

A number of years ago nurses (RNs) were not given the respect and compensation they deserved and were often treated as “second class citizens” within the medical field. Recognizing that their image problem would not change on its own and was hindering efforts to recruit talented young people, the nursing profession made strategic efforts to remold its image. How nurses are viewed and compensated today has dramatically changed, illustrating what can happen when a group of professionals becomes proactive and embraces a common vision. The early childhood profession must learn from this and other examples and work together to develop a strategic plan.

**VISION/GOAL 2:**

*Improve the profession’s self-image and obtain community support*

Foster greater professionalism among early childhood practitioners and significantly enhance the image of, and community respect and support for, the profession as a whole.

The profession should:
1) embrace professional growth;
2) become a proactive, influential advocate for families, children and the early childhood professional community; and
3) gain the respect and active support of parents, educators, employers and the public at large, as well as of those in the field.
Changing the image from outside the early childhood profession must also occur. Early care and education in general has not received the attention and resources it needs from the community. Many parents, employers and others have not made the connection between the quality of early care and education and its long-term effects on children. Recently, the corporate community and school system have begun to invest resources in the school readiness of educationally at-risk four-year-olds through Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools’ Bright Beginnings Program. Little attention, however, has been devoted to the need for a continuum of quality early care and education for the much greater number of young children (birth to five-years-old) in the county’s non-public programs. The public agenda needs to expand to include all children.

Objective 2.1. Improve the Profession’s Self-Image
Promote an expectation of professionalism within the field.

Strategy 2.1a. Initiate an “Internal” Public Relations Campaign
Initiate a well-developed and strategic public relations campaign to explain to practitioners the value of increasing the field’s professionalism. A well-crafted, consistent message should be developed and effectively delivered to the early childhood community. Professionalism should correlate with educational attainment and experience. The message should address the terms practitioners use to refer to themselves. Use of the term “professional” vs. the terms “provider” or “child care worker” should be emphasized for those meeting certain defined qualifications. Target audiences for the campaign should include directors and owners/operators as well as teachers and other practitioners. Information on how other industries and professions (such as the military) have evoked greater professionalism within their ranks should be obtained for potential application to the early childhood profession. Linkages should be made with state and national efforts to elevate the profession.

Strategy 2.1b. Expand Collaboration Among Professional Associations
Ensure that early childhood professional organizations collaborate and become advocates for a higher level of professionalism. Welcome not only owners and directors, but also teachers into these organizations that provide professional advocacy and support.

Existing associations should hold quarterly joint meetings, with planning sessions of officers/leaders held prior to each. Other strategies might include a joint newsletter and web site or an annual leadership retreat. Membership in existing associations should be encouraged in order to foster a greater sense of professionalism within the field.

Strategy 2.1c. Increase Communication
Identify effective ways to communicate information about the profession and professional development to all early childhood practitioners.
Objective 2.2. Unify the Profession

Unify the profession across the early care and education spectrum (e.g., family child care homes, commercial centers, not-for-profit centers, public and private pre-K programs, part-day preschools, Head Start, etc.) and across the educational spectrum, including credentials, Associate of Arts (two-year degrees), Bachelors and Masters degrees, etc.

Strategy 2.2a. Identify Commonalities
Identify and focus on the commonalities rather than on the differences among various types of facilities and practitioners. A broad representation of the field should come together to discuss ways the industry can be unified. A half or full-day retreat could be devoted to this topic, with a national or local key-note speaker providing the expertise needed to shape the discussion and develop an action agenda. Those in the field need to recognize that all, regardless of their affiliations, are working on behalf of children’s growth and development.

Strategy 2.2b. Provide Opportunities for Joint Service to the Field
Encourage inclusion of a broad range of practitioners on active and ad hoc committees and advisory groups that are considering issues affecting the early care and education field.

Objective 2.3. Increase Community Awareness and Education

Educate parents, the business community, civic leaders, the media and the general public about the early childhood profession, its contributions and value to children, families and the community-at-large. The strong correlation between quality early care and education and the community's ability to build and retain a skilled workforce is a critical message that will resonate with both parents and employers.

Strategy 2.3a. Develop an “External” Public Relations Campaign
Develop, secure funding for, and implement a public relations campaign to promote the importance of the early childhood profession. As with the internal public relations campaign, a distinct message or “tag line” should be developed, and community leaders and the media should be engaged to deliver it as “champions” for the profession. The role that early care and education plays in helping employers recruit and retain their workforce should be emphasized.

Ready-to-use campaigns developed and employed elsewhere for the early childhood profession should be evaluated for potential adaptation and use in Mecklenburg County.
Strategy 2.3b. Increase Collaboration Among Local Boards
Convene a joint meeting of local boards that address early care and education issues—e.g., Smart Start, Child Care Resources Inc., United Way Success By Six, the Mecklenburg Child Care Association, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Association for the Education of Young Children, the Greater Charlotte Family Child Care Association and boards of directors from individual centers—to begin a dialogue on how to increase public recognition of, and support for, the early childhood profession.

**VISION/GOAL 3:**
A well-coordinated, articulated and outcomes-oriented career development system

Create and operate a well-coordinated, articulated, diverse, relevant and outcomes-oriented career development system that:

1) is clearly understood by and accessible to all early childhood professionals;
2) promotes high quality standards for the profession and builds on a clearly defined career lattice;
3) strongly encourages individuals in the field to seek professional degrees in early childhood education;
4) provides diverse, high quality and relevant professional development opportunities; and
5) offers ongoing, effective support to early childhood professionals.

**Background**
Many of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's early childhood professionals are actively involved in their own professional growth and development. However, a large number are not, choosing only to meet the state's minimum requirements for entering or continuing to work in the field. This is job survival rather than professional development. Indeed, lack of interest in pursuing professional growth and development opportunities may, in part, be due to a lack of personal responsibility and to the “it's just a job” view of the profession. Also contributing to the problem are the dearth of financial incentives for advancement in the field and the lack of a coordinated, comprehensive professional development “system” to facilitate career progression.

In recent years, a number of positive, collaborative efforts have been initiated to improve and streamline the quality and delivery of professional development opportunities in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. However, duplication and lack of coordinated planning still exist. Developing a more coordinated delivery system will take time, resources, funding and the early care and education community's commitment to work together to build and maintain the system.
Some of the issues and challenges that must be addressed are:

- **Lack of Knowledge of Professional Development and Career Opportunities:** It is common for individuals working in the field, particularly in entry level positions, to report that they are not aware of career or professional development options.

- **Limited Opportunities to Earn College Credit for Courses and Other Professional Development:** While helpful, informative, and necessary to meet licensing's in-service training requirements, many of the training courses and workshops provided in the community do not offer credit that leads to certification or a degree in the early childhood field. Certificates of completion for noncredit-bearing courses, or other training activities, line the walls of many child care programs; however, as these courses do not articulate, they cannot be leveraged to produce higher salaries for staff or enable programs to increase their star ratings. Credit is also not extended to individuals for their years of early care and education experience. Professional development that leads nowhere is frustrating for those who have invested precious time and energy in it.

- **Difficulty Transferring College Credits:** Articulation of college credit can be difficult to achieve due to variations in coursework requirements among institutions. The difficulty associated with tracking courses taken by individual students over time also affects progression in professional development.

- **Limited Access to Training:** Many in the field desire professional advancement and growth, however they often face the challenges of not having the time for and/or access to training and other professional development opportunities. Due to staff shortages and the necessity of having classroom coverage at all times, it is often difficult to give center staff release time to attend training during the work day. It is an even greater challenge for family child care homes where the owner is typically the only employee.

  Participating in professional development on their own time is also difficult for many in the field. Although evening and weekend training sessions are preferred according to surveys of practitioners, even these times are often problematic since many staff have small children or other family obligations. After a long day of working intensely with children with few breaks, many others have little energy left for evening coursework. Most of those enrolled in the associates degree program at CPCC, for example, also have full-time jobs in the field. Affordability is an issue for some, and the process of obtaining scholarship funding can be cumbersome.
For the Early Childhood Field in Charlotte-Mecklenburg

- **Lack of Variety in Professional Development Offerings:** Individuals working in the early childhood profession exhibit a wide range of skills and expertise. Some are in the beginning stages of teacher development while others have years of experience and are highly skilled. A continuum of courses and other training is needed as the currently offered “menu” of courses and other professional development activities does not fully address the need to accommodate differing levels of expertise. In addition, more coursework that incorporates hands-on training is needed to bridge the gap between theory or formal knowledge and their application in the work environment.

- **Quality and Skills of Local Early Childhood Educators and Trainers:** Although Mecklenburg has many excellent and effective early childhood educators and trainers, concerns have been raised about the overall quality of instruction. Currently a high degree of accountability to ensure that educators and trainers are effective does not exist within the higher education/local training establishment. If the early childhood profession is expected to raise its standards of quality, then educators and trainers should be expected to focus on their professional standards, knowledge and skills as well.

- **Limited Support for Child Care Professionals:** There is limited support available for teachers. This is evidenced by the lack of orientation for many new teachers and the “burn-out” of more experienced teachers. Directors and owners struggle with the day-to-day challenges of operating programs, often on tight budgets and with staff shortages. Turnover for directors is high; according to a statewide study conducted by the Child Care Services Association in 1998, 14% of directors left their centers within the preceding 12 month period. These, and a variety of other issues, point to the lack of an overall support system for the profession.

- **Need for Cultural Diversity and Cultural Competence:** The early childhood profession must address issues related to diversity. Charlotte-Mecklenburg's international population is growing rapidly; this is especially true for Hispanics/Latinos and Asians. An increasing number of families from these and other cultures are seeking early care and education for their children. However, few centers currently have bilingual staff, and the lack of understanding of, and sensitivity toward, other cultures presents challenges that should be addressed in training and coursework. The need to have early childhood professionals who are representative of the diverse populations served mandates that recruitment of individuals from other cultures be actively pursued.
• **Lack of System Accountability:** Other than individual course evaluations by participants and the state’s Star Rating System, there are few mechanisms in place to gauge the effectiveness of early childhood professional development or of the system as a whole. It is unclear whether the resources being devoted to professional development are actually improving the community's quality of early care and education and, ultimately, the outcomes for children. Professional development is often inadequately funded and the funding level often dictates quality. Greater system accountability is needed; however, establishing this will not be an easy task. It should include convening a diverse committee of stakeholders to determine outcomes and adopt or develop appropriate evaluation measures. Evaluation should encompass measurements of trainer competency and effectiveness; relevancy of coursework and training provided; accessibility of professional development opportunities; progress through the career lattice and whether it has resulted in increased compensation; program movement within the star rated system; rate of staff turnover, etc. Tools utilized might include questions asked on CCRI’s annual provider survey, pre and post use of focus groups, comparisons of data included on the CCRI Info Survey to data on past years.

• **Lack of On-going and Site-Based Technical Assistance:** Technical assistance utilizes mentoring relationships and enables knowledge gained through coursework or training to be applied in real world settings. Currently, although demand is great, there are few options available for Mecklenburg’s practitioners to access site-based, hands-on technical assistance.

Considering these, and other issues and challenges related to Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s early childhood professional development system, this plan focuses on the following objectives for creating a coordinated delivery system.
Key Objectives for Creating a Coordinated Delivery System

Documentation
- Monitor attrition, recruitment, turnover, career advancement, salary and other pertinent data for system-wide planning and evaluation.

Career lattice
- As a profession, adopt and promote a career lattice that clearly shows progression and benchmarks within the field and provides information on educational attainment, core knowledge and skills needed to successfully function in various positions along the lattice.

Articulation
- Articulate training to provide more opportunities for individuals to accumulate college credit and participate in an official career development continuum.

Educational attainment
- Increase the number of early childhood degreed professionals, as well as the number of individuals who are participating, on an ongoing basis, in continuing education and other professional development opportunities.

Training options
- Expand the menu of relevant, high quality training and other professional development opportunities available in the community.

Access to training
- Improve access to training for all individuals working in the early care and education field, including those representing diverse cultural backgrounds.

Ongoing support
- Provide ongoing support for those working in the early care and education field, and expand the availability of on-site, hands-on technical assistance.

Quality instruction
- Ensure that all trainers have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach courses.

System management and accountability
- Establish a system for coordinating, monitoring, evaluating and continuously improving the overall training and professional development delivery system in Mecklenburg County.
Objective 3.1. Document the Status of the Early Childhood Profession

Monitor the dynamics of the profession (e.g., attrition, recruitment, turn-over, career advancement, educational attainment, salary, etc.) for system-wide planning and evaluation purposes.

Strategy 3.1a. Develop a Database
Develop and maintain a database that builds on the employment information about early childhood professionals currently tracked by Child Care Resources Inc.

Strategy 3.1b. Track Employment Data
Collaborate with the Employment Security Commission to track employment data in specific industries in order to monitor trends in employment and compensation and provide comparisons to data for early care and education.

Objective 3.2. Adopt and Promote the Career Lattice
Adopt and promote the use of the career lattice, further described and illustrated on pages 25-31, as the desired continuum for Mecklenburg County’s early childhood professional development. This lattice includes the educational requirements, core knowledge, skills, pre-service and in-service training and professional affiliation expected for seven levels within the local early childhood field. Annual salary range recommendations for each position are also indicated.

Strategy 3.2a. Orientation and Training
Provide all area high school, college and workforce development guidance counselors and early childhood educators/trainers with an orientation and training sessions on the basic career lattice to help them understand and effectively promote the profession’s lattice and career pathways.

Strategy 3.2b. Marketing
Aggressively “market” the basic career lattice to family child care owners/operators, teachers, directors and others in the early childhood profession. Seek buy-in by clearly illustrating the short and long-term benefits of embracing the model. Marketing strategies could include presentations to early care and education organizations, colorful posters illustrating the lattice posted in all centers and homes and a booklet that describes the career lattice and local professional development “system.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Opportunities</th>
<th>Education/Training</th>
<th>Personal Attributes/Skills</th>
<th>Core Knowledge to Be Acquired*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aides</td>
<td>Education:</td>
<td>Desire to help children</td>
<td>These staff are developing a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High School Diploma, GED and families</td>
<td></td>
<td>basic knowledge of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floaters</td>
<td>In-Service Training:</td>
<td>Emotionally and physically healthy</td>
<td>following categories (NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subs</td>
<td>10 hours in the core knowledge areas, utilizing standardized curriculum delivered by NCDCD approved trainers including:</td>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>In-service Training Topic Area) in early care and education:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Child Care</td>
<td>Health and safety regulations and procedures</td>
<td>Literate</td>
<td>Planning a safe, healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Level I</td>
<td>Center guidelines and policies</td>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent/staff interactions</td>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Children's physical &amp; intellectual development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and 20 hours annually in core knowledge areas</td>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>Children's social &amp; emotional development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommended yearly salary range:**  $12,400 - $18,300 or ($6.00 - $9.00/hr)

*Competency in these core knowledge areas should be acquired before the individual moves to the next level.
### Early Care and Education Basic Career Lattice

**Beginning Level Professional Level II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Opportunities</th>
<th>Education/Training</th>
<th>Personal Attributes/Skills</th>
<th>Core Knowledge to Be Acquired*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>Minimum Education: High School Diploma, GED NC Credential</td>
<td>Attributes and Skills contained in Level I plus: Commitment to the field Willingness to be mentored Open to suggestions Team player Basic writing skills Planning a safe, healthy learning environment Promoting children’s physical &amp; intellectual development Promoting children’s social &amp; emotional development Establishing productive relationships with families Classroom/group management Professionalism Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)</td>
<td>Knowledge contained in Level I plus: Observing and recording children’s behavior Child growth and development Inclusion of children with special needs Planning (individual and curriculum) Oral and written communication Organizational and time management practices Advanced ability to interact with parents and families Environment Rating Scales For Family Child Care Professionals Thorough understanding of the following: Small business practices Use of Environment Rating Scales Available community resources Advocacy at the local level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Child Care Professional Level II</td>
<td>Minimum Experience: Six months in an early care and education setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-Service Training: Meets all in-service requirements from Entry Level 15 clock hours utilizing standardized Level I core knowledge curriculum delivered by NCCDD approved trainers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In-Service Training: 40 clock hours annually in Level I core knowledge areas (NC Early Childhood Credential may count as 33 hours)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NC Early Childhood Credential II/Family Child Care Credential or nationally certified CDA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommended yearly salary range:** $16,600 - $22,000 or $8.00 - $11.00/hr

Professional Affiliation: Member of a local early childhood professional organization

*Competency in these core knowledge areas should be acquired before the individual moves to the next level.

Child Care Resources Inc.
# Early Care and Education Basic Career Lattice

## Intermediate Professional

## Level III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Opportunities</th>
<th>Education/Training</th>
<th>Personal Attributes/Skills</th>
<th>Core Knowledge to Be Acquired*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Teacher              | **Minimum Education:** Associate of Arts degree in early childhood education (AAECE) or related field with 9 semester hours in Early Childhood  
**Minimum Experience:** One year in an early care and education setting or Equivalent supervised internship of at least 1,100 hours in an early care and education setting  
**Training:** Meets all training requirements from Level II  
**In-Service Training:** 35 clock hours annually in Level III core knowledge areas | Attributes and Skills contained in Level II plus:  
Observing and recording children’s behavior  
Child growth and development  
Inclusion of children with special needs  
Planning skills (individual and curriculum)  
Oral and written communication skills  
Organizational and time management skills  
Advanced ability to interact with parents and families  
Environment Rating Scales | Knowledge contained in Level II plus:  
Advanced observation, assessment and recording skills  
Adult conflict management  
Available community resources  
Identifying exceptional children  
Learning styles  
Cultural competency  
Interpersonal relationship building  
Problem solving  
Use of Environment Rating Scales  
Basic/Local advocacy  
**For Family Child Care Professionals:** In addition to the above:  
Small business practices  
Use of Environment Rating Scales  
Available community resources  
Advocacy at the local level |

**Recommended yearly salary range:** $20,000 - $27,040 or ($10.00 - $13.00/hr)

*Professional Affiliation: Member of a local and state early childhood professional organization  
*Competency in these core knowledge areas should be acquired before the individual moves to the next level.
### Early Care and Education Basic Career Lattice

#### Advanced Professional Level IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Opportunities</th>
<th>Education/Training</th>
<th>Personal Attributes/Skills</th>
<th>Core Knowledge to Be Acquired*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lead Teacher</td>
<td><strong>Minimum Education:</strong> BA/BS in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or related field plus 18 hours of ECE or comparable experience or B-K license. <strong>Minimum Experience:</strong> Two years in an early care and education classroom setting or Equivalent supervised internship of at least 2,200 hours in an early care and education setting. <strong>Pre-Service Training:</strong> Meets all training requirements from Level III. <strong>In-Service Training:</strong> 35 clock hours annually in Level IV Core Knowledge areas</td>
<td>Attributes and Skills contained in Level III plus: Advanced skills in observation, assessment and recording Adult conflict management Available community resources Identifying exceptional children Learning styles Cultural competency Interpersonal relationship building Problem solving Use of Environment Rating Scales Basic/Local advocacy</td>
<td>Knowledge contained in Level III plus: Mentoring Training Performance assessment Advanced communication and computer skills Curriculum development Marketing Fund raising Grant writing Enhanced/Statewide advocacy Administrative and supervisory skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### For Family Child Care Professionals

In addition to the above:

- Administrative and supervisory skills
- Advanced understanding of small business practices
- Enhanced advocacy skills - State level

**Recommended yearly salary range:** ......... $29,120 - $35,360 or ($14.00 - $17.00/hr)

Professional Affiliation: Member of a local and national early childhood professional organization

*Competency in these core knowledge areas should be acquired before the individual moves to the next level.
## Plan of Action

**Early Care and Education Basic Career Lattice**

**Advanced Professional**

**Level V**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Opportunities</th>
<th>Education/Training</th>
<th>Personal Attributes/Skills</th>
<th>Core Knowledge to Be Acquired*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program/Education Coordinator</td>
<td>Minimum Education: BA/BS in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or related field plus 18 hours of ECE or comparable experience or B-K.</td>
<td>Attributes and Skills contained in Level IV plus mentoring skills training skills performance assessment advanced communication and computer skills curriculum development marketing skills fund raising and grant writing skills enhanced/statewide advocacy skills administrative and supervisory skills</td>
<td>Knowledge contained in Level IV plus: in-depth specialization in DAP program development program evaluation variety of curricula adult learning styles consultation family involvement licensing compliance and other state and local regulations advanced time management administrative and organizational skills management and coordination of new projects advanced business management labor laws finance/budgeting personnel policies and procedures purchasing professional ethics resources/networking federal advocacy public speaking resources/networking advocate for early care and education issues ability to develop training modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Child Care Mentor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner, Small Center Located in a Residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchandiser</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach Pre-Kindergarten in the Public School Setting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Managers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Child Care Professional Level V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pre-Service Training:**
- 25 hours of supervision/administration training through proposed career resource center
- 15 hours of model mentoring training for master teachers

**In-Service Training:**
- 35 clock hours annually in Level V core knowledge areas

Recommended yearly salary range: $31,200 - $37,440 or ($15.00 - $18.00/hr)

Professional Affiliation: Active leadership role in local organization and membership in national early care and education organizations

*Competency in these core knowledge areas should be acquired before the individual moves to the next level.

Child Care Resources Inc.
## Early Care and Education Basic Career Lattice
### Advanced Professional
#### Level VI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Opportunities</th>
<th>Education/Training</th>
<th>Personal Attributes/Skills</th>
<th>Core Knowledge to Be Acquired*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Center Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge contained in Level V plus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trainers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Level VI professionals are acquiring knowledge and specialization in a field of concentration/interest area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants-Licensing; Abuse/Neglect; Private/Self-Employed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Education of children and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Development Specialist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Adult learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Nutrition Consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention Specialist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitation skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Therapist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing syllabi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master Teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing hypotheses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA Advisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Design methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAEYC/NAFCC Validator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Program development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Program management and coordinating new projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Visitor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Technical writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Specialist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Program evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Life Specialist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Research and publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Mental Health Child Counselor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Data collection and dissemination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/Family Consultant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Policy issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced advocacy experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Child Care Professional Level VI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Minimum Education:** BA/BS in Early Childhood Education (ECE) or related field plus 18 hours of ECE or comparable experience or B-K license for all positions

**Minimum Experience:** 5 years in early care and education setting with at least 2 years in direct contact with children, i.e. as a classroom teacher/family child care provider.

**In-Service Training:** 10 clock hours annually for all positions

**Recommended yearly salary range:** $33,280 - $39,520 or ($16.00 - $19.00/hr)

---

Professional Affiliation: Active member of local organization and national early care and education organizations

*Competency in these core knowledge areas should be acquired before the individual moves to the next level.
## Early Care and Education Basic Career Lattice

### Advanced Professional Level VII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Opportunities</th>
<th>Education/Training</th>
<th>Personal Attributes/Skills</th>
<th>Core Knowledge to Be Acquired*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td><strong>Minimum Education:</strong> Masters or Ph.D. OR combination of education and experience</td>
<td>Attributes and Skills contained in Level VI plus:</td>
<td>Knowledge contained in Level VI plus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbyist</td>
<td><strong>Minimum Experience:</strong> More than five years in early care and education related occupations</td>
<td>Creative Ability to inspire Visionary Education of children and adults Adult learning strategies Assessment Facilitation skills Developing syllabi Developing hypotheses Design methodology Program development Program management and coordinating new projects Technical writing skills Program evaluation Research and publication Data collection and dissemination Policy issues Advanced advocacy experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College Instructor</td>
<td><strong>In-Service Training:</strong> 10 clock hours annually for all positions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Level VII professionals are acquiring additional knowledge and specialization in their chosen fields.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource and Referral Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Acquisition of knowledge continues throughout their careers as they continue to be advocates for the early care and education profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor in 4-Year Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recommended yearly salary range:** .................................. $40,000 and above

Professional Affiliation: Active member of local organization and national early care and education organizations

Child Care Resources Inc.
Objective 3.3. Ensure Articulated Training

Ensure smooth and seamless articulation of rigorous pre-service and in-service training, continuing education courses, high school courses and two and four-year programs.

Strategy 3.3a. Develop Articulation Between CMS and CPCC
Develop and implement an articulation agreement between Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and CPCC for early childhood courses.

Strategy 3.3b. Support Existing Articulation Between CPCC and UNC-Charlotte and UNC-Greensboro
Continue to support the existing articulation agreement between CPCC and UNC-C/UNC-G and increase the number of CPCC courses that can be articulated.

Strategy 3.3c. Facilitate Articulation with Other Colleges
Approach JCSU, Queens College, Winthrop College and other area four-year colleges about offering courses and/or a degree program in early childhood education that can be articulated with CPCC’s program. Support the agreement that is being negotiated between CPCC and North Carolina Central University.

Strategy 3.3d. Explore Articulation Between CPCC and Community-based Training Entities to Obtain Credit for Community-Based Training
Develop articulation agreements between CPCC and community-based training entities such as Child Care Resources Inc., United Family Services and Mecklenburg County Infant/Toddler/Pre-school Services for certain basic coursework that can be taught in the community with credit transferred to the community college.

Strategy 3.3e. Pursue Experience-Based Credit
Explore options with the community college system for experienced family child care owners/operators, teachers and directors to take standardized placement tests to potentially “test out” of and receive college credit for certain required courses in CPCC’s early childhood program.

Objective 3.4. Increase Number of Degreed Professionals

Encourage and actively help individuals working in the early care and education field to obtain a two-year, four-year and/or masters degree in early childhood education. The Credentials courses required by the State should be viewed as the beginning of the educational continuum — not the end.
Strategy 3.4a. Develop Credit-Bearing Modules
Divide credit-bearing courses into teaching modules that can be taught sequentially by community-based trainers or off-site CPCC instructors. Taking college courses can be intimidating for some; therefore, offering courses in what may be perceived as less intimidating community settings and over a longer period of time may be an effective way to start individuals on the path to obtaining a two-year degree.

Strategy 3.4b. Explore Ways to Ensure Accessible Times and Locations of Classes
Make every effort to ensure that classes offered at CPCC are offered at times and in locations that can accommodate currently employed early childhood professionals.

Strategy 3.4c. Provide Validation of Child Development Associate Credential (CDA)
Identify the best framework for delivering CDA training so that the training bears college credit, advancement in the profession occurs and individuals who successfully complete the training are compensated appropriately.

Strategy 3.4d. Establish Community-Based Career Counseling
Create an early childhood career resource center that:
1) provides information and guidance on moving through the levels of the career lattice;
2) provides educational credit-bearing training opportunities within the community;
3) helps individuals develop a professional portfolio that documents classes, credits and other previous training, professional and life experience, and education;
4) offers assessment of skills;
5) provides guidance and support for those making career decisions; and
6) is a central clearinghouse or repository of documentation for individuals who have successfully completed courses or other training.

Strategy 3.4e. Market the TEACH Program
Aggressively promote the benefits of using North Carolina’s TEACH program to help early childhood professionals attain higher education. As part of this local promotional effort, work with Child Care Services to identify ways to improve and streamline the process for obtaining TEACH scholarship funds.

Strategy 3.4f. Identify Other Sources of Scholarships
Actively seek additional sources of scholarship funding for early childhood education and market them to potential and current members of the profession.
Objective 3.5. Expand Training Opportunities

Increase the number and variety of courses, workshops and other training opportunities that address the specific day-to-day needs of new and experienced early childhood professionals. Training and coursework will be based on the core knowledge areas defined in the Career Lattice, and technical assistance will be expanded.

Strategy 3.5a. Introduction to the Field

Develop a mandatory intensive orientation to the early care and education field for all new center-based teachers to be taken prior to, or within, the first month of employment. This orientation should also be available for family child care home operators after application for licensure. The curriculum would be delivered through approved trainers in core knowledge areas as defined in the Career Lattice. As part of this orientation, for at least a 90-day period, new teachers will be paired with experienced teachers and provided with opportunities to observe experienced teachers in the classroom. Directors should also develop a “buddy” system for new teachers that allows them to work together on common issues and challenges. Through the proposed career resource center, a similar system would be developed to link new family child care providers with a mentor during their first 90 days.

Strategy 3.5b. Offer Advanced Courses

Develop and offer more advanced coursework and other professional development opportunities for experienced teachers, directors and family child care owners (e.g., curriculum development, storytelling, science instruction or supervision and management techniques.) Opportunities to apply formal knowledge and gain hands-on experience should be provided as part of the learning experience.

Strategy 3.5c. Provide Diversity Training

Develop coursework specifically for the early childhood profession that focuses on cultural diversity and competence, including family involvement in multicultural learning, anti-bias curriculum, and effective methods of working with families of varied cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Strategy 3.5d. Offer Technology Courses for Child Care Professionals

Develop and offer basic computer courses built on modules that address the use of computers to support administrative tasks and provide access to online professional development resources.

Strategy 3.5e. Develop Business Management Courses for Family Child Care Homes and Small Center Owners

Develop courses, comprised of modules, that expand the Credentials II course and include effective time management to better help family child care owners/operators plan for and manage their businesses. These courses, and other business support should be linked to the local Small Business Administration or SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives) Association.
Strategy 3.5f. Encourage Classroom Observation
Establish a network of centers that will provide open observation days for teachers and directors in classrooms taught by experienced, successful teachers in order to share information and “best practices” techniques and encourage new thinking and creativity. Establish a similar network for family child care owners/operators.

Strategy 3.5g. Implement Customized and Holistic Site-Based Professional Development for Centers
Implement a high-intensity, collaborative site-based and credit-bearing model that brings “best practices” training and technical assistance to two and three-star licensed centers serving children ages 0-5. Centers would request this service, specific to the center’s needs, on a voluntary basis. Multi-disciplinary teams of experts should deliver the training and assistance.

Strategy 3.5h. Expand Professional Development for Directors
Expand professional development opportunities specific to center directors, encouraging directors to seek training related to personnel management and delegation, effective communication and mediation, organization and time management and other topics that will enable them to become more effective leaders and managers. A curriculum will be developed to instruct directors in providing meaningful, site-specific orientations for new teachers.

Strategy 3.5i. Explore Alternative Training
Explore the use of alternative training such as credit-bearing “mini”-courses within weekend conferences and summer institutes to provide professional development options for early childhood professionals.

Strategy 3.5j. Utilize Professional Development Needs Assessment
Continue to use CCRI’s early care and education questionnaire, coordinating efforts with the Smart Start Workforce Development Survey, to survey current employees of family child care homes and centers and trainers in order to identify specific needs for training and other professional development. Specialists and licensing consultants who work regularly with programs should be asked to provide input on professional development needs to those developing and offering training. In addition, providers of training targeted to early care and education should meet on a quarterly basis to discuss needs and coordinate professional development activities.
Objective 3.6. Improve Access to Professional Development Opportunities

Increase the awareness of, and access to, courses, training and other professional development opportunities for early care and education professionals.

Strategy 3.6a. Utilize Marketing
Develop creative ways to better promote and market education and training opportunities to all practitioners, including the use of an expanded, user-friendly professional development web page on CCRI’s website that will link to other educational entities; continuation of the quarterly joint training calendar; and development of a booklet outlining the career lattice and resources associated with the local professional development system.

Strategy 3.6b. Expand Site-Based Training
Provide more site-based training for centers and family child care homes, including opportunities for centers and family child care homes that are located close to each other to share training and its costs.

Strategy 3.6c. Create a Pool of Substitutes
Explore the possibility of creating, coordinating and managing a reliable “pool” of qualified internal and external substitutes to cover classrooms when teachers at centers are in training, ill or on vacation. Groups of family child care homes should coordinate efforts to establish and train a small pool of substitutes they would feel comfortable having in their homes.

Strategy 3.6d. Offer Televised and Internet Courses
Offer more televised, Internet and distance learning courses for credit.

Strategy 3.6e. Increase Courses at CPCC Branch Campuses
Increase the number and variety of early childhood courses taught at CPCC branch campuses, particularly as new branches open.

Strategy 3.6f. Provide “Train-the-Trainer” Opportunities
Develop more opportunities for center directors and experienced teachers to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively train staff at their centers. Similarly, the train-the-trainer model should be used in the family child care environment with groups of family child care homes.

Strategy 3.6g. Increase Evening/Weekend Course Modules
Utilize the module approach to increase the number of weekend workshops and courses offered.

Strategy 3.6h. Promote a Loan Forgiveness Program
Promote at the state level, state college loan forgiveness programs for students completing a degree in early childhood education and committing to work in early care and education classrooms for a specified amount of time.
Objective 3.7. Provide Ongoing Support

Ensure that individuals working in the early care and education field are provided with the support needed to help them succeed in the profession and to reduce turnover. Particular attention should be focused on new, inexperienced teachers; experienced teachers who are dealing with “burn-out;” owners of family child care homes who feel isolated; and directors who are juggling multiple responsibilities.

Strategy 3.7a. Increase Mentoring
Explore options for sustaining the Model Mentoring Program at CPCC and develop other mentoring initiatives based on models used by other professions. Develop a mentoring training manual, identify incentives directors can use to encourage and train experienced teachers as mentors and provide ongoing mentor support. The opportunity to attract retired early care and education teachers, or elementary teachers with expertise in early childhood, to serve as mentors should also be explored.

Strategy 3.7b. Establish Peer Support Groups
Establish peer support groups (e.g., new teachers, experienced teachers, family child care home owners/operators or center directors) to discuss and address common issues. These groups should be facilitated by trainers and/or qualified group members.

Strategy 3.7c. Provide Human Resources Support for Directors
Provide human resource tools such as skill assessment surveys, compensation guides or sample interview questions to help directors hire and retain employees.
Objective 3.8.  Ensure Quality Instruction

Ensure that all trainers have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach courses and provide a consistent level of quality.

Strategy 3.8a.  Enhance Communication Among Trainers
Create a forum for representatives from the various training entities to meet on a regular basis to discuss common training issues and coordinate the planning of professional development activities.

Strategy 3.8b.  Conduct Train-the-Trainer “Institutes”
Conduct quarterly training sessions for trainers throughout Mecklenburg’s early care and education community (public and private) to enhance their knowledge and teaching skills.

Strategy 3.8c.  Explore the Use of Training Credentials
Explore the use of training credentials, voluntary local licensing, and other options to ensure that trainers are qualified to teach.

Strategy 3.8d.  Develop a Feedback Mechanism
Develop and use a common survey instrument to seek student input and evaluation of trainers/instructors, and identify and develop other mechanisms to gauge trainer effectiveness.

Objective 3.9.  Ensure System Tracking and Accountability

Establish a system of coordinating, monitoring, evaluating, and continuously improving the overall training delivery system in Mecklenburg County.

Strategy 3.9a.  Develop an Integrated Data Management System
Expand CCRI’s efforts to develop and maintain a common system of collecting and updating information on the growth and development of the local early childhood profession including:

1) a workforce “registry” in which all credit obtained by the county’s early care and education professionals is tracked (building on the information and data collection system being developed by the state);
2) training referral data; and
3) recruitment, retention and turn-over data including information such as the job status/employment of individuals after they complete career lattice levels and the types of jobs people pursue when they leave the early childhood profession.

Strategy 3.9b.  Consider an Integrated Reporting System
Explore options and funding for creating an integrated reporting system for the performance of all training and professional development entities.
IV. Plan Implementation

To help structure implementation of the plan, an implementation committee should be formed to identify priorities and delineate one and two-year implementation agendas. The committee should consist of representatives from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Child Care Resources Inc., CPCC, Head Start, Mecklenburg County Infant/Toddler/Pre-School Services, Smart Start, UNCC, and local child care associations. State licensing consultants, individual trainers and parents should also serve on this committee. Child Care Resources would be willing to facilitate the plan's implementation if funding is secured. The work of this group should be enhanced by community interest in the Blueprint for Children Report.

The plan addresses implementation over a period of five years although it is anticipated that additional time will be necessary for the plan’s vision to be fully realized. Milestones for the plan’s implementation will include:

**Year 1**

- Procurement of endorsements of Reaching Higher! at the association, organization, program and community levels.
- Establishment of a Reaching Higher! Implementation Committee to serve as a catalyst for, and monitor of, the plan’s forward progress.
- Convening of an Early Childhood Financing Task Force.
- Alignment of existing professional development workshops and coursework with career lattice levels and identification of gaps in professional development opportunities.
- Alignment of early childhood job descriptions with the Reaching Higher! Career Lattice.
- Progress toward alignment of salaries with the career lattice.
- Development of a campaign to encourage active commitment to the plan, developing and providing a checklist of options to indicate how each organization, agency, program and the community will align with Reaching Higher!
- Planning and securing funding for a public relations campaign targeted to specific audiences.
- Increased collaboration among early childhood professional organizations, including expanded opportunities for mentoring
- Development of a career resource system, to facilitate tracking and evaluating professional progress in the field.
- Design of an instructor evaluation tool to be used by all agencies and organizations providing training and coursework.
- Development of an evaluation design for Reaching Higher!, identifying short and long term goals.
Year 2

- Assessment and reporting of Year 1 progress.
- Expansion of the number of agencies, organizations and programs making commitments to Reaching Higher!
- Reactivation and expansion of Corporate Champions in support of early childhood.
- Identification and prioritization of both traditional and nontraditional funding options for Reaching Higher! and the early childhood field.
- Increased collaboration among local boards that address early care and education issues and mobilization of the early childhood professional organizations toward common goals.
- Development of a plan to create a substitute pool.
- Expansion of site-based training and implementation of credit-bearing modules that can be taught sequentially and within community settings.
- Implementation of a public relations campaign.
- Provision of “train the trainer” opportunities to address the quality and consistency of training provided to the field.
- Development of coursework/workshops to address gaps identified in a professional development needs assessment.
- Implementation of customized, holistic, site-based professional development.

Year 3

- Assessment and reporting of Year 2 progress.
- Implementation of priority funding strategies.
- Commencement of discussions on experience-based credit.
- Full implementation of a common system of collecting and updating information on the profession.
- Establishment of a network of centers to provide observation days and modeling of “best practices” techniques.
- Provision of advanced coursework/workshops for directors.

Year 4

- Assessment and reporting of Year 3 progress.
- Commencement of planning for Year 6 and beyond.
- Exploration of the option to require early childhood trainers to possess training credentials.

Year 5

- Institutionalization of funding.
- Institutionalization of the Reaching Higher! Professional Development Plan and the Career Lattice
- Evaluation and report of five year progress.
Long-term outcomes will be met when the majority of children in early care and education settings are in 4 or 5 star programs in which all the practitioners have at least an AA degree and at least 50% have a BA in the field.

The Professional Development Plan's vision will not be realized until early care and education receives the community support and financial incentives required to achieve quality, and opportunities for advancement and articulated professional development are available and accessible to all early childhood professionals. It will take significant time and resources to achieve. As we are reminded in Not By Chance: Creating an Early Care and Education System for America's Children (1997), fundamental, lasting change does not occur overnight and efforts to improve the qualifications of the professionals working with young children need to be intentional, well-planned and adequately funded. Compensation for those who work with young children should be comparable to wages and benefits earned by those with similar education, experience and responsibilities in other fields and should be borne by the community at large - including the general public, employers and government - not limited by parents' ability to pay. An effective system of professional development needs to provide a continuum of pre-service, in-service, intermediate and advanced level training and coursework, recognizing the barriers to increased education and developing strategies to overcome them.

If children are our community's most important asset, vital to the community's economic future, we can no longer afford to accept the status quo. The community as a whole needs to recognize that what happens to a child before school is not just care — it is education — and for young children to meet their full potential, those who provide that education must be well-trained and educated.
GLOSSARY

(Note: Positions included are described as defined by the Career Lattice)

**Aide:** An individual who assists in the operation of an early care and education program in a variety of ways. Requires a high school diploma or GED.

**Articulation:** Linkages made between four-year colleges, two-year community colleges, high schools and/or community-based training institutions that allow individuals to obtain college credit for coursework taken outside the higher education system. Formal articulation agreements are required for articulation of coursework.

**Career Lattice:** Represents a vertical progression of roles and levels that individuals working in the early childhood profession can achieve, and identifies the pathways between them.

**CDA (Child Development Associate):** A credential awarded to individuals who have completed a predetermined amount of training and field experience with young children by the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition in Washington, D.C.

**Contact Hours:** Actual time spent in classroom lecture/discussion or work experience.

**Core Knowledge:** The specific knowledge needed by early childhood professionals to work effectively with children.

**Credit Hours:** Hours awarded for coursework or work experience at the college level as determined by the individual institution. Credit hours are usually referred to in semester hours of credit. A typical college class will carry three (3) semester hours of credit.

**Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP):** A framework in which early care and education professionals consider a child’s developmental age when preparing learning environments and experiences.

**Early Care and Education:** Care and learning environments for children from birth through age eight, including those provided by child care centers, family child care homes, part-day preschools, Head Start, and public schools.

**Early Childhood Administration I:** A community college course, bearing two hours of credit, that serves as an introduction to the policies, procedures and responsibilities needed by administrators in order to effectively manage early care and education programs. Required by the N.C. Division of Child Development for directors of early care and education programs.
Early Childhood Administration II: A community college course, bearing 2 hours of credit, to be taken subsequent to Early Childhood Administrative I. It provides a foundation for budgetary, financial and personnel management of a child care facility. Required by the N.C. Division of Child Development for directors of early care and education programs.

Early Childhood Credential I: A community college course, bearing 2 hours of credit, that serves as an introduction to the early childhood field. Required by the N.C. Division of Child Development for lead teachers in early childhood programs.

Early Childhood Credential II: A community college course, bearing 2 hours of credit, that explores early childhood issues. Required by the N.C. Division of Child Development for lead teachers in early childhood programs.

Early Childhood Professional: One who works to better the lives of young children either through direct service or through working with those who deliver the direct service; often used interchangeably with practitioner, provider, and early care and education professional when describing one who works directly with children.

Family Child Care: Child care and education that is provided to eight or fewer children, ages birth to 12, in the provider's home (up to five preschoolers and three school-agers).

In-Service Training and Education: Learning obtained after employment in the field.

Lead Teacher: The teacher in the classroom who is responsible for planning and implementing the learning experiences. Requires a BA/BS in early childhood education or B-K license.

Mentor: One who coaches and supports, sharing knowledge and experience to promote the growth and learning of another.

Pre-Service Training and Education: Learning acquired before beginning a job, or a prerequisite for a specific position.

Professional Development: The experience, activities and learning in which practitioners engage to improve their performance and obtain the skills and knowledge to advance in their profession.

Related Field of Study: Those social sciences that address any facet of human development or family development (e.g., psychology, sociology, special education, etc.).

Teacher: The individual in the classroom who implements the learning experiences. Requires an Associate of Arts degree in early childhood education or in a related field with 9 semester hours in early childhood.

Teaching Assistant: The teacher who assists the lead teacher in implementing the learning experiences. Requires a high school diploma/GED and a N.C Credential I.

Technical Assistance: On-site, intensive support provided to programs which utilizes mentoring relationships and enables knowledge gained through coursework or training to be applied in real world settings.
APPENDIX

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notes