

EFFECTS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE CREDENTIAL SYSTEM 2.0 ON
CANDIDATE SUCCESS RATES

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The purpose of this research was to identify the impact of process changes that have been made to the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, which is a beginning early childhood teacher credential that focuses on competency based standards widely seen as necessary for early childhood teachers to possess. The process in which early childhood teachers receive their credential changed in 2013 with the implementation of CDA credential 2.0. Changes included taking a computerized exam and the implementation of a professional development specialist conducting an on-site classroom observation. In order to determine the impact that CDA 2.0 had on teacher credentialing success rates, a mixed-method sequential design was employed. First, existing data sets of success rates from a national scholarship program were reviewed. Following, interviews with CDA credential seekers were conducted. Findings revealed that while candidate success rates increased for those receiving CDA credentials under the 2.0 system, the actual number of candidates receiving scholarships to pursue the CDA credential through the national scholarship program decreased. Qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews indicated that three areas that impacted CDA 2.0 candidate success rates were the professional education programs and instructors, the CDA Exam, and Professional Development Specialists. This is the first research study to examine the CDA credential process. The findings demonstrate that the 2.0 system provides candidates with necessary supports to be successful. A significant question arising out of the data is how a determination is made to issue a credential. Before QRIS and public policy initiatives employ

more efforts to professionalize the field of early childhood – primarily through the CDA credential – the process by which one obtains a credential should be more thoroughly examined.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A steady increase in the need for early education and care for young children in the United States makes the issue of high quality child care a pressing matter (Child Care Aware of America, 2014). In 2014, the average child spent time in some type of early care setting, be it preschool, a childcare center, or a family childcare home. According to the National Association for Child Care Resource and Referral (2012), children are in care an average of 36 hours per week; this is a 1-hour increase from a similar study conducted two years earlier. Furthermore, in 2014, over 15 million young children were estimated to potentially need early care and education services throughout the United States (Child Care Aware of America, 2014).

The high numbers of young children needing early care and education services and the families of young children seeking high quality care raises an important question. Who can provide high quality education and care for our nation's youngest children? More than 40 years ago, a similar question was plaguing the children of our nation. In 1970, the Office of Child Development, led by Dr. Edward Zigler, was charged with strengthening the Head Start program and writing the Child Development Act of 1971. Dr. Zigler knew that both initiatives would call for skilled early childhood teachers to help meet the growing need of staffing Head Start and private childcare centers (Washington, 2013).

Shortly thereafter, Dr. Zigler, in conjunction with the Child Development Associate Consortium (CDAC), began the task of developing a professional assessment for skilled teachers. The CDAC was composed of leaders in the early childhood field; their ultimate goal was to develop a national early childhood credentialing system to recognize competencies needed to work with young children (Bouverat & Galen, 1994). This credentialing system is

known today as the Child Development Associate (CDA). In 1975, the first CDA candidates received their credentials. Today, over 350,000 early childhood teachers have demonstrated their competency in working with young children and are Child Development Associates (Council for Professional Recognition [CFPR], 2014). The CDA credential is seen as a valuable attribute to the field of early childhood education and has been referred to as an important aspect of the professionalization of early childhood teachers, especially those beginning their career (Mitchell, 2007).

Support for the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

Research supports the need of the Child Development Associate Credential (CFPR, 2014; Heisner, & Lederberg, 2011; Washington, 2013). Early childhood teachers who have received additional education and training tend to provide higher quality care and feel better prepared to meet the needs of young learners (Heisner, 2008; Heisner & Lederberg, 2011). Furthermore, the need for in-depth professional development programs that combine research and theory on early childhood education in conjunction with practical issues often faced by those in the early childhood workforce cannot be overstated. The most common early childhood education program of this nature is in the Child Development Associate Credential (Finn-Stevenson et al., 2001; Heisner, 2008; Saracho, 1999).

The CDA Credential at one time was endorsed by, and overseen by, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (NAEYC and the Council for Professional Recognition, 2012). The CDA Credential serves as the entry-level teacher education standard for accreditation by the NAEYC and is considered an effective professional development tool to assist beginning practitioners in understanding basic child development knowledge (Bredenkamp, 2000). NAEYC and the Council for Professional Recognition also have

a joint document highlighting the suggested relationship between the CDA and the NAEYC standards for professional preparation programs. The relationship highlights suggestions for implementing systems of professional preparation for CDA programs and also aligns NAEYC standards with CDA subject areas, providing a framework for better understanding the CDA as a “key stepping stone on the path of career advancement in the field of early childhood education” (NAEYC and Council for Professional Recognition, 2012, p. 1).

Research also supports the positive benefits the CDA credential has on increasing classroom quality. Higher rates of sensitivity in the classroom, increased language play, higher levels of understanding of child-centered beliefs, and the setting of future professional development goals are benefits shown by research of the CDA Credential (Finn-Stevenson et al., 2001; Heisner, 2008; Peters & Sutton, 1984; Saracho, 1999; Torquati, Raikes, & Huddleston-Casas, 2007). Howes (1997) suggests the CDA results in a better understanding of and usage of developmentally appropriate practice in the classroom, implying a connection from educational theory to classroom application is relevant for CDA students. Of particular interest is that this is most true for those in the workforce with the least education and/or experience (Finn-Stevenson et al., 2001; Heisner, 2008; Saracho, 1999).

Historical Changes in the CDA Credentialing System

Since the first candidates obtained their credentials in 1975, over 350,000 early childhood teachers have completed the CDA credentialing process (CFPR, 2014). However, in the last forty years, many changes have occurred in the credentialing process of early childhood teachers wishing to be Child Development Associates. In the early days of CDA credentialing, teachers of young children demonstrated competencies before a Local Assessment Team (LAT). Local Assessment Teams were created to review a candidate’s work and determine a credentialing

decision. Members of the LAT included an early childhood advisor, a parent or community representative, a representative from the CDA Council, and the CDA candidate. These teams would review (1) a professional portfolio prepared by the CDA candidate and (2) parent questionnaires. Following the review, the LAT met with the CDA candidate; members would then vote on whether or not to credential the candidate. In this system, it was the responsibility of the representative of the CDA Council to ensure the LAT adhered to the policies and procedures set by the CDA Council (Hinitz, 1998).

In 1990, in an effort to advance the credentialing process, changes were made to the procedures (Hinitz, 1998). It was during these changes that the CDA Council became more concerned with the professional education of its candidates. The council formed a new division within its framework that focused solely on the training of CDA candidates. New procedures required each candidate to receive 120 hours of professional education covering specific topics related to working with young children. A key element of the new procedures was the elimination of the Local Assessment Teams. This new process was referred to as the CDA Direct Assessment System; under this new 3-step system, CDA candidates (1) prepared a professional portfolio, (2) were observed in the classroom by a CDA Advisor (an early childhood professional chosen by the CDA candidate), and (3) participated in a verification visit conducted by a representative of the CDA Council. During the verification visit, the candidate was interviewed by their chosen CDA council representative, took a written exam, and reviewed feedback provided by parents of children in the candidate's classroom (Bouverat & Galen, 1994). This system continued until 2013 (CFPR, 2014).

In 2013, the Council for Professional Recognition launched CDA 2.0, in which multiple components of the credentialing system were revised. The council's vision behind CDA 2.0 was

to “work diligently to advance the professional development and compensation levels of the early childhood workforce and professional recognition for the field” (Washington, 2013, p. 68). In the current system, candidates select a Professional Development Specialist who has received online training and certification from the CDA Council. Professional Development Specialists are found and selected through a portal on the CDA Council’s website, (www.cdacouncil.org). The Professional Development Specialist’s role is to observe and score the candidate’s work in their classroom setting, review the candidate’s professional portfolio, and lastly, engage in a reflective dialogue with the candidate. The other significant change in the credentialing process has been the advent of a computerized test, taken at a testing center, which replaces the previously used paper and pencil test, the Early Childhood Studies Review.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold. Firstly, the intent is to assess the impact CDA 2.0 has had on the success rates of credentialing CDA candidates. Success rates will be determined by the number of CDA candidates that receive credentials after completing the CDA 2.0 process. Secondly, the purpose is to examine the effects the process changes have had on credentialing award rates. This study is the first of its kind to research the success rates of CDA candidates under the current system. Subsequently, this inquiry intends to (1) investigate the experiences of CDA 2.0 credential holders and (2) to gain information regarding candidate’s personal experiences under the CDA 2.0 System.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are provided for a clearer understanding of the items and issues addressed by this study.

- CDA. Child Development Associate (CDA) is an individual who has successfully completed the CDA assessment process and has been awarded the CDA credential by the Council for Professional Recognition, a national association that supports professional development in early education and care.
- CDA Council. The Council for Professional Recognition is often referred to as the CDA Council. This is the national association that supports credentialing and professional development in early childhood education; they have existed under other names in the past.
- CDAC- Child Development Associate Consortium. A group of professionals involved in pioneering the CDA initiative and determining how the CDA system would be put into place
- Professional Development Specialist. In CDA 2.0, this is the Council for Professional Recognition's representative that provides the verification visit at the early childhood center.
- CDA Advisor. In past CDA credentialing systems, this was the person who observed the CDA candidate in the classroom.
- Direct Assessment. The past CDA credentialing system before CDA 2.0 was implemented
- Candidate. The individual or individuals seeking a CDA credential.
- CDA 2.0. The current CDA credentialing system.

Statement of the Problem

The growing body of research regarding the Council for Professional Development's Child Development Associate Credentialing Program focuses largely on the extensive benefits of early childhood teacher credentialing (Bredekamp, 2000; Heisner & Lederberg, 2011; Hinitz, 1998; Mitchell, 2007). Teachers of young children who hold the CDA Credential demonstrate competencies of higher classroom quality and teaching than do teachers of young children who do not hold a credential or have any formal education (Torquati, Riakes, & Huddleston-Casas, 2007).

However, researching the systems in place that the CDA Council uses for credentialing an early childhood teacher is a new venture. The Council for Professional Recognition is currently undertaking its own independent study of the effects of CDA 2.0 on the credentialing of CDA candidates (Brandi King, personal communication, February 12, 2015). The vision behind CDA 2.0 was to continue to offer the credentialing program as a competency-based credential that represents, "expert consensus about what early childhood educators should know and be able to do" (Washington, 2013, p. 68). Thus, the fundamental issues addressed in this study are: (1) What impacts, if any, has the CDA 2.0 had on the success of CDA candidates? (2) Have the changes that have been made to the credentialing system helped candidates?; and, (3) have the changes strengthened the CDA?

Research Question

CDA 2.0 "updates the CDA knowledge base while preserving familiar, time-tested elements such as the portfolio, parent engagement, and the exam" (Washington, 2013 p. 69). CDA 2.0 also introduces new elements such as candidate reflection and the role of the Professional Development Specialist into the credentialing process. Furthermore, CDA 2.0

embraces technology in ways the previous credentialing system did not. Candidates are now able to apply and choose a Professional Development Specialist through the web portal, and ultimately, schedule the CDA Exam at a testing center online.

This study seeks to investigate the impact changes in the CDA credentialing system have had on the success rates of CDA candidates. Specifically, the overarching research question guiding this study is: What impacts, if any, have the CDA 2.0 changes had on the success rates of CDA candidates?

Significance of the Study

Issues regarding the professional development of classroom teachers permeate the early childhood education discourse. Low wages, high turnover, limited evidence of the effectiveness of training programs, varying funding sources for different types of early childhood education programs, and a general state of disconnectedness among providers make professional development of early childhood educators a complex systematic issue (Kagan & Kauerz, 2012; Rhodes & Houston, 2012). However, there are opportunities to improve and further the professional development of early childhood teachers.

Quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) provide a framework for states to work towards building stronger early childhood education programs to benefit young children, families, and early childhood teachers (The Build Initiative and Child Trends, 2014). Forty-nine of the 50 states (with the exception of Missouri) have either implemented (on some level) or are planning to implement a QRIS as of August of 2014 (QRIS National Learning Network, 2014). As Rhodes and Houston (2012) suggest, quality rating improvement systems (QRIS) in many states:

Recognize higher quality (albeit at the center, not teacher, level), career ladders...that support and reward increased skills and education, subsidy programs that are allowed to use some portion of funds for incentivizing improved performance, and Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge funds for some states to integrate and align their ECCE policies and agencies. (p. 2)

Quality rating and improvement systems are similar in some ways among states utilizing the framework. One way in which they are similar relates to staff qualifications and professional development as essential components of the QRIS (Alaska Early Childhood Policy Research, 2008). As an example, in Texas' QRIS, Texas Rising Star, one of the new qualifications for the highest level Texas Rising Star Provider is that at each early childhood center, 75% of all full time caregivers have at least a CDA credential (K. Addison, personal communication, January 25, 2015). QRIS have placed an increased need for existing and future child-care providers to receive additional training and professional development to meet minimum state guidelines. Seventy one percent of QRIS have standards regarding teachers having a state or national credential, much like the CDA (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children & Families, 2011).

Administrators of CDA credentialing programs and/or the Council for Professional Recognition may be able to use the information gathered from this study as a way to understand the impact the 2013 credentialing changes have had on CDA candidates. The implications of this inquiry could potentially create supportive research to assist CDA professional education programs in preparing CDA candidates, as well as the Council for Professional Recognition in considering current credentialing systems in place.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The CDA Credential is an early childhood teacher credentialing program in the United States aimed at increasing the quality of early care and education for children aged birth to five years old. The Council for Professional Recognition, commonly known as the CDA Council, is the non-profit organization that oversees the program; this group is responsible for the largest early childhood teacher credentialing process in the United States. Therefore, an individual receiving a CDA credential is taking the best first step to early childhood teacher credentialing (Council for Professional Recognition, 2014).

The Council for Professional Recognition, with oversight provided by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), offers the CDA credential depending on the setting in which an early childhood professional is employed (Washington, 2013). Professionals may work towards an infant/toddler, preschool, family child-care home, or a home visitor credential. Each of the four credentials requires a prospect have 480 hours of work experience in the respective setting, as well as 120 hours of professional education and a high school diploma or GED prior to applying for the CDA credential. While a high school diploma or GED had been previously required, in 2011 the Council for Professional Recognition instituted policy changes that made it possible for high school students enrolled in career and technical courses to be eligible to receive their CDA (Langlais, 2012). Currently, there is a great need in the United States for a more educated and higher skilled workforce to care for young children in a variety of child care settings (Kagan & Kauerz, 2012; Rhodes & Huston, 2012; Whitebrook, 2012).

History of the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential

Early Days of the CDA Credential

Beginning in the late 1960s, Dr. Edward Zigler, who is commonly referred to as the “father of the CDA,” became increasingly involved in national public policy and child-care initiatives related to the education of young children. In 1971, in his role as Director of the Office of Child Development (OCD) of the federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), Dr. Zigler began revamping the Head Start program (Washington, 2013). At the same time, Dr. Zigler was also heavily involved with drafting the Child Development Act of 1971. This act would help create “a national child care system in America that any parent could access” (Washington, 2013, p. 2). The increased availability of child-care and accompanying resources for parents and families was a monumental feat for the field of early childhood education. However, a critical component was missing, as child-care centers found themselves unable to staff their centers with well trained teachers (Washington, 2013). Further conversations regarding the formation of the CDA credential took place with a group of 39 representatives from a variety of child related organizations in the United States. Subsequently, a task force was created to develop a list of competencies and training plans for future CDA students (Hintz, 1998).

The Role of the Child Development Associate Consortium (CDAC)

In June of 1972, the Child Development Associate Consortium (CDAC) was formed and included representatives from NAEYC, the Association for Childhood Education International, as well as other leaders in the field (Association for Childhood Education International, 2014; Council for Professional Recognition, 2014). Over the next two years, the CDAC along with a diverse group of approximately 1200 child development experts in “culturally, philosophically,

and administratively diverse child care programs” (Perry, 1990, p. 87) would work towards developing the national CDA credentialing system under the guidance of the Office of Child Development and NAEYC. Members of the CDAC were specifically tasked with ensuring that the CDA credential encouraged diversity, a whole-teacher approach, and a set of competency standards for early childhood educators.

One concern of the CDAC was ensuring the competencies and CDA standards represented the diversity of early childhood teachers, young children, and families (Hintz, 1998). During the development of the CDA credential, the majority of early childhood educators were middle class, white women; this did not accurately represent the racial and ethnic diversity of young children enrolled in early care and education centers throughout the United States (Perry, 1990). In 1988, 53% of early childhood educators completing the National Survey of the CDA, reported being white (Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 1994). The standards and competencies the CDAC would develop represented the need for preparing teachers of young children to work with diverse populations (Council for Professional Recognition, 2014).

The CDAC continued developing CDA competencies, all the while recognizing the importance of the development of the “whole child” as well as the “whole teacher” (Council for Professional Recognition, 2014). CDAC members, with strong leadership from Barbara Biber of the Bank Street College of Education, addressed the need for a whole child approach, which addressed the necessity of viewing all areas of a child’s development as important (Hinitz, 1998). Today’s CDA credentialing program continues to adhere to these values by ensuring candidates have received, as part of their professional education component, training specific to all areas of child development.

In conjunction with the “whole child” approach, Perry (1990) highlighted the importance placed on development of the “whole teacher” as well. Rather than developing a list of isolated teaching behaviors, the CDAC competencies represented an, “integrated pattern of skills, attitudes, and feelings that provide meaning to the discrete behaviors” (Perry, 1990, p. 187).

Child Development Associate (CDA) Competency Standards and Functional Areas

The CDAC also developed CDA competency standards and functional areas, which are still used today (Hinitz, 1998; Washington, 2013). Simply put, the six competency standards “set the standard of competency for professional behaviors” (Washington, 2013, p. 5) and provide a framework for the development of each candidate’s professional portfolio (Council for Professional Recognition, 2014). The thirteen functional areas more clearly define the six competency standards and detail the “major tasks or functions that an early care and learning professional must complete in order to meet each competency standard” (Washington, 2013, p. 5). The six competency standards and thirteen functional areas are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Child Development Associate (CDA) Competency Standards and Functional Areas

Competency Standard	Functional Area and Definition
I. To establish and maintain a safe, healthy learning environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="586 1388 1474 1457">1. Safe: Candidate provides a safe environment and teaches children safe practices to prevent injuries. <li data-bbox="586 1499 1479 1614">2. Healthy: Candidate provides an environment that promotes health and prevents illness and teaches children about good nutrition and practices that promote wellness. <li data-bbox="586 1656 1511 1829">3. Learning Environment: Candidate organizes and uses relationships, the physical space, materials, daily schedule, and routines to create a secure, interesting, and enjoyable environment that promotes engagement, play exploration, and learning of all children including children with special needs.

<p>II. To advance physical and intellectual competence</p>	<p>4. Physical: Candidate uses a variety of developmentally appropriate equipment, learning experiences and teaching strategies to promote the physical development (fine motor and gross motor) of all children.</p> <p>5. Cognitive: Candidate uses a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences and teaching strategies to promote curiosity, reasoning, and problem solving and to lay the foundation for all later learning. Candidate implements curriculum that promotes children’s learning of important mathematics, science, technology, social studies and other content goals.</p> <p>6. Communication: Candidate uses a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences and teaching strategies to promote children’s language and early literacy learning, and help them communicate their thoughts and feelings verbally and nonverbally. Candidate helps dual-language learners make progress in understanding and speaking both English and their home language.</p> <p>7. Creative: Candidate uses a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences and teaching strategies for children to explore music, movement, and the visual arts, and to develop and express their individual creative abilities.</p>
<p>III. To support social and emotional development and to provide positive guidance</p>	<p>8. Self: Candidate develops a warm, positive, supportive, and responsive relationship with each child, and helps each child learn about and take pride in his or her individual cultural identity.</p> <p>9. Social: Candidate helps each child function effectively in the group, learn to express feelings, acquire social skills, and make friends, and promotes mutual respect among children and adults.</p> <p>10. Guidance: Candidate provides a supportive environment and uses effective strategies to promote children’s self-regulation and support acceptable behaviors, and effectively intervenes for children with persistent challenging behaviors.</p>
<p>IV. To establish positive and productive relationships with families</p>	<p>11. Families: Candidate establishes a positive, responsive, and cooperative relationship with each child’s family, engages in two-way communication with families, encourages their involvement in the program, and supports the child’s relationship with his or her family.</p>
<p>V. To ensure a well-run purposeful program that is responsive to participant needs</p>	<p>12. Program Management: Candidate is a manager who uses observation, documentation, and planning to support children’s development and learning and to ensure effective operation of the classroom or group. The Candidate is a competent organizer, planner, record keeper, communicator, and a cooperative co-worker.</p>

VI. To maintain a commitment to professionalism	13. Professionalism: Candidate makes decisions based on knowledge of research-based early childhood practices, promotes high quality in child care services, and takes advantage of opportunities to improve knowledge and competence, both for personal and professional growth and for the benefit of children and families.
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Note. Adapted from “Essentials for working with young children,” by V. Washington, 2013, p. 6. Copyright 2013 by the Council for Professional Recognition.

The Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential Begins

The CDAC initiated a pilot program of the CDA credential in 1974, which resulted in 34 early childhood educators receiving their CDA credential in 1975 (Hinitz, 1998). The initial credentialing process included the development of a Local Assessment Team (LAT) by the CDA candidate. The Local Assessment Team consisted of an advisor, a parent or community representative, a representative from the CDA council, and the CDA candidate (Child Development Associate Consortium, 1978). Briefly stated, the initial CDA credentialing process first consisted of the candidate preparing information and documentation to present to the Local Assessment Team in the form of a professional portfolio. Secondly, the parent or community representative would collect information from the parents in the teacher’s classroom regarding classroom experience and interactions with children and families. Lastly, the team would review the materials, meet with and interview the candidate, and then vote on the candidate’s competence (Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 1989). In this system, it was the responsibility of the CDA Council’s representative to ensure the Local Assessment Team accurately followed the procedures set forth by the CDAC (Hinitz, 1998).

Finding a Home for the National Credentialing Program

The CDA credential has been housed in several national institutions (Hinitz, 1998). From the CDA's inception in the early 1970s through 1980, the credential was housed in the Office of Child Development, with oversight by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. By 1980, the credential, and those working with the national credentialing program, were in a state of concern because the CDA program had been the recipient of grants and contracts from the Office of Child Development and the continued funding was being limited a great deal (Hinitz, 1998). The CDA National Credentialing Program then came under the auspices of the Bank Street College of Education, with the assistance of some federal funding (Council for Professional Recognition, 2014; Hinitz, 1998). In 1986, an ancillary organization of the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, was formed to oversee the CDA credential. In 1989, this organization became a non-profit institution separate from NAEYC and is now known as the Council for Professional Recognition (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2001). Table 2 provides a summary and timeline of the groups responsible for managing the CDA credential.

Table 2

Organizations Responsible for the Child Development Associate Credential

Year	Organization
1975-1980	Office of Child Development in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare
1980-1986	Bank Street College of Education
1986- 1989	Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, an Ancillary Organization of the National Association for the Education of Young Children
1989- Present	The Council for Professional Recognition

Note. Adapted from “Credentialing early childhood paraprofessionals in the United States: The Child Development Associate and other frameworks,” by B.F. Hinitz, 1998, p. 88. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 6(1), 87-103.

Changes to the CDA Credentialing System

The Council for Professional Recognition implemented significant changes to the CDA credentialing process in 1990 by creating a division within the council focused solely on the training of early childhood professionals (Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 1989). This process required CDA candidates to complete 120 hours of professional coursework in early childhood education from an educational institution or a recognized organization (Hinitz, 1998). The council required that these 120 hours of professional education provided 10 hours in each of the 8 CDA subject areas of (1) health and safety, (2) child physical intellectual development, (3) support of child social and emotional development, (4) productive relationships with families, (5) effective program operation, (6) professionalism, (7) observation and recording of children’s behavior, and (8) principles of child growth and development (Council for Professional Recognition, 2014). The Council for Professional Recognition continues to follow these same education guidelines today.

In addition, the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition also changed the process of how a candidate would complete their CDA credentialing process. The process

moved away from the Local Assessment Team and implemented changes to what a candidate would do following completion of the professional education component; the final step included a direct assessment to receive a CDA credential (Council for Professional Recognition, 2014; Hinitz, 1998).

The Direct Assessment system included multiple components to test a candidate's readiness (Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 1989). CDA candidates were required to compile a Professional Resource File, collect parent questionnaires, and be observed by a CDA Advisor. Under the Direct Assessment system, candidates chose their own CDA Advisor with little to no supervision from the CDA Council. Once a candidate completed these steps, a Verification Visit was conducted by a representative of the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition. During this visit, the CDA Representative conducted an oral interview using a series of situation cards, administered a written test known as the Early Childhood Studies Review, and reviewed the parent questionnaires (The Child Development Associate Consortium, 1978). The candidate's documents were sent to the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition and reviewed by the national council committee and a decision was reached whether or not to award the candidate.

In 2011, The Council for Professional Recognition lifted the age requirement for the credentialing (CDA) process. Previously, a CDA candidate needed to have either a high school diploma or a GED; under the new system, any student who is under the age of 18 and enrolled in a high school Family and Consumer Science Child Development program or in a Career and Technical Education Child Development program may apply as a CDA candidate. Langlais highlights that many high school Family and Consumer Science Child Development Programs could benefit and that, "Specifically, high schools that already have programs with laboratory

components, either within the school or at off-site early childhood facilities, would be perfect candidates to offer CDA credentialing because both content knowledge in human development concepts and experiential expertise are already established in the curriculum” (Langlais, 2012, p. 44). The high school CDA credentialing process requires professional education and work experience of all CDA candidates.

CDA 2.0

In 2013, the Council for Professional Recognition launched a new credentialing process called CDA 2.0 (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013). In this new credentialing system, one primary goal is to “transform the CDA credentialing process into an even more powerful professional development experience” (Washington, 2013, p. 2). The new system still has in place multiple sources of evidence for candidates to demonstrate their competence in working with young children. Candidates are required to complete 120 hours of professional education and 480 hours of work experience with the age group in which he or she wishes to receive the credential. In addition, candidates prepare a professional portfolio, receive feedback from families through family questionnaires, participate in an on-site observation, and take a computer-based exam (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013).

The Professional Portfolio

Before a candidate may apply for a CDA credential, he or she must also prepare a professional portfolio. Two of the largest components of the professional portfolio are the Resource Collection and the Reflective Statements of Competence (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013). The Resource Collection includes a variety of assignments. The assignments include creating a weekly menu, documenting nine learning experiences, writing a bibliography of developmentally appropriate books for young children, and establishing a family

resource guide. In addition to the resource collection, the candidate must develop six written Reflective Statements of Competence. These statements include “establishing a safe, healthy learning environment, advancing children’s physical and intellectual development, supporting social and emotional development, establishing positive and productive relationships with families, ensuring a well-run purposeful program that is responsive to participant needs, and maintaining a commitment to professionalism” (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013, p. 15).

Another important component of the CDA credentialing system is the distribution and collection of family questionnaires (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013). Each candidate is required to collect data on one more than half the number of students in their classroom and include a summary sheet of the feedback, as well as the original questionnaires completed by family members. Lastly as a capstone project, each CDA candidate must also prepare a Professional Philosophy Statement (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013).

Demonstrating Competencies

The Council for Professional Recognition has made multiple changes in how CDA candidates demonstrate their competencies. One of the substantial changes implemented through CDA 2.0 is that of the on-site observation, or what the council calls the Verification Visit. During the Verification Visit, a Professional Development Specialist visits the CDA candidate in his/her classroom or family child-care home. The specialist is a representative who is paid a \$100 honorarium through the CDA council and who must meet the educational requirements set by the council. The specialist must also attend an online training created to prepare specialists to conduct Verification Visits. Once the qualifications of the specialist have been verified, the CDA candidates choose the Professional Development Specialist through an online directory on

the Council for Professional Recognition's website. The online directory provides a picture, brief biography, and describes the expertise of the Professional Development Specialist. During the Professional Development Specialist's Verification Visit, the specialist will conduct an observation in the candidate's classroom or family home child care program, review the candidate's professional portfolio, and lastly, engage the CDA candidate in a reflective dialogue. Following this process, the specialist submits notes and documentation regarding the Verification Visit electronically to the Council for Professional Recognition (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013; Council for Professional Recognition, 2014).

In the past, CDA candidates chose a CDA Advisor to conduct their observation. The CDA advisor did need to meet educational requirements set by the CDA Council, but in many cases early childhood educators had center directors, site managers, or other teaching staff at their own place of employment who could conduct the onsite observation. Within this system, the possible conflicts of interest were described that might impact objectivity and credibility.

These limitations were that a CDA Advisor:

- 1) Must not be working as co-teacher with the Candidate on a daily basis in the same room or group;
- 2) Must not be the relative of a child in the Candidate's care at any time during the assessment process;
- 3) Must not be related by blood or marriage or other legal relationship to the candidate (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013).

Within the CDA 2.0 system, additional guidelines are explicitly described in order to discourage candidates from choosing a Professional Development Specialist who might have a potential conflict of interest. Candidates may not choose a specialist if she/he is:

- 1) An immediate relative (mother, father, sibling, spouse, son, daughter)
- 2) A current direct supervisor
- 3) A co-worker in the same group/classroom that you work (Council for Professional Recognition, 2014, p. 19).

In addition, the Council for Professional Recognition provides guidance in regards to other potential conflicts of interest that might bear ethical consideration by the candidate and the Professional Development Specialist. The council suggests, “positions of a prospective Professional Development Specialist that bear ethical consideration by you both are:

- 1) Indirect supervisor
- 2) Trainer, either indirect or direct
- 3) Any person or representative of an organization that has financial/contractual considerations related to you or may benefit in any way from your credentialing outcome
- 4) Your employer
- 5) A co-employee in the same facility, not in the same group/classroom
- 6) A peer/friend
- 7) Any person who may have a personal or professional bias toward or against you or any group of which you are a part
- 8) A licensing agent” (Council for Professional Recognition, 2014, p. 19).

The other significant change the Council for Professional Recognition implemented is that of the testing procedure (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013). In the past, candidates took a paper and pencil test administered during the verification visit. Today, candidates schedule a computerized test at a Pearson Vue Testing Center (Council for

Professional Recognition, 2014). Candidates have the option to utilize the Council for Professional Recognition's website and follow a link to find and schedule a testing center online, or they can choose to call the Pearson Vue toll free hotline to locate a testing center and schedule the test. Test scores are sent electronically from the Pearson Vue Testing Center to the Council for Professional Recognition (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013; Washington, 2013)

Once the Council for Professional Recognition receives the CDA candidate's application, the candidate has six months to have their specialist conduct the Verification Visit and to take the computerized test. In an effort to keep the credentialing process candidate driven, the council allows candidates to choose whether they would prefer to take the computerized test first or have the Verification Visit (Washington, 2013). After completion of both the Verification Visit and the computerized test, a council representative reviews the electronic submissions of both the test scores and the results of the Verification Visit and determines the credentialing status.

Candidates receive the credentialing decision through email or mail depending on information provided on the original application (Council for Professional Recognition, 2013; Council for Professional Recognition, 2014).

The Role of Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS)

The federal Office of Child Care in the Department of Health and Human Services provides funding to states interested in implementing an early childhood Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) (Austin, Whitebrook, Connors, & Darrah, 2011). QRISs are defined as a protocol which, "provides a framework for building strong early care and education systems within states" (Zaslow, 2013, p.1). More specifically, QRISs assess, improve, and communicate key quality indicators that should be present in a high quality early childhood center (Zaslow, 2013; Zellman & Pearlman, 2009).

Beginning with the implementation of Oklahoma’s “Reaching for the Stars” program in 1998, QRISs have quickly become an integral component of increasing the quality of early childhood centers (Zellman & Pearlman, 2009). Early childhood centers generally want to participate in QRISs due to the fact that they support early childhood centers’ efforts to pursue quality as well as the state’s interest in early care and education. In many states, QRISs help support early childhood centers by funding approved professional development efforts and paying for needed supplies, materials, and equipment in order to help meet specific goals and outcomes (Department of Health and Human Services, 2011).

Staff qualifications and professional development are at the core of nearly every QRIS in place in the United States. QRISs that focus on staff qualifications and professional development have attributes that positively affect both young children and their teachers (Kagan & Kauerz, 2012) Research supports that higher levels of measured staff quality positively affect early childhood learning environments. A direct correlation exists between these two components; as learning environments are positively affected, so are child outcomes (City University of New York, 2009). In addition, programs that participate in QRISs seem to find benefits for teachers in two realms. First, the early childhood teachers involved in the QRIS tend to stay in the classroom longer than teachers who do not participate in centers involved in QRIS. Secondly, teachers who do work at early childhood centers that participate in QRISs tend to benefit from higher rates of pay than early childhood teachers who did not participate in a QRIS (Alaska Quality Rating and Improvement System, 2008; Department of Health and Human Services, 2011).

Quality rating and improvement systems recognize the Child Development Associate credential as one indicator of program quality, and this ultimately drives the need for more early

childhood teachers to seek the credential (Zaslow, 2013). State-to-state pre-service qualification vary depending on the regulations a state has adopted for their QRIS. However, one thing is certain. The CDA, as a preservice qualification for early childhood teachers, is prevalent in many of states. In the most recent Office of Child Care Issue Brief (2014), the CDA is listed as a requirement in 71% of the states on some level of their QRIS (Benson, 2015). Many states have systems based on qualifications that an early childhood center must meet at 1, 2, 3, or 4 levels. This means that in some states, a center wishing to be a level 1 QRIS may not need any teachers with a CDA. However, in the same state for an early childhood center to be on a level 3, 50% of the full-time teachers may need to have a minimum of a CDA (Zaslow, 2013). In the state of Texas for example, with implementation of new state guidelines for QRIS, Texas Rising Star, in order for an early childhood center to be a level 4 center, 75% of full-time teaching staff must have a minimum of a CDA (Zaslow, 2013). In summary, states push for program quality and QRISs drive the need for more early childhood teachers to further their formal education by getting a CDA credential.

The T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Program and Its Impact on the CDA Credential

Low pay, high turnover, and low educational levels plague early childhood education centers across the United States (Kagan & Kauerz, 2012). Child-care workers on average earn approximately \$18,632 per year (Child Care Services Association, 2009a). Each year, inadequate compensation contributes to high rates of teacher turnover, high job stress, and continuing the cycle of poverty for many employed by early childhood education centers (Child Care Services Association, 2015a; Miller & Bogatova, 2009). States estimate each year that their turnover numbers are between 25% to 50%, with most states estimating approximately 35% early childhood teacher turnover each year (Miller & Bogatova, 2009, p. 274).

High rates of turnover impact early childhood programs in many negative ways. Turnover tends to stress children and parents, creates a sense of loss for children and the program, and strains employers and existing teaching staff as they search for replacements (Child Care Services Association, 2009b, p. 1). Low pay and high turnover further compound the issue of low educational attainment by many early childhood teachers. Research shows that the early childhood workforce has considerably lower levels of education than those recommended by many experts (Miller & Bogatova, 2009, p. 257). Increased demands and expectations of early childhood teachers further increase the need for a more educated early childhood workforce. (Kagan and Kauerz, 2012).

In 1990, a North Carolina scholarship program was initiated to address these three large system wide issues in the field of early childhood education. The Teacher Education and Compensation Helps Early Childhood (T.E.A.C.H.) project was initiated by the Child Care Services Association, “in order to provide quality early care and education services, the education, compensation and retention of the early childhood workforce would need to be addressed” (Child Care Services Association, 2015c, p. 1). The program was implemented with a mission to “create a sustainable strategy to improve the education level of those working with young children in out of home settings” (p. 1). The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood’s mission was achieved by focusing on five components listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Five Components of the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship

Component of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Scholarship Project	Component Description
Comprehensive Scholarships	Provide support for early childhood educators to access college courses, certificates and degrees in child development or early childhood education resulting in no student debt.
College Education	Require completion of a specified number of credit hours per contract at a participating college or university coupled with support from T.E.A.C.H. Counselors
Counselor	Support each recipient by providing a state-based T.E.A.C.H. counselor able to assist the student in securing a scholarship, navigating the college processes, helping the student balance work, family and school and monitoring progress and needs.
Compensation	Increase earnings throughout the provision of a bonus and or a raise for recipients who complete the education in a prescribed period of time to support economic viability of staff.
Commitment	Establish a contract between employee, employer, and T.E.A.C.H. that requires the recipient to remain in the sponsoring program for a specified period of time (generally a year) after they receive their scholarship to reduce staff turnover.

Note. Adapted from “T.E.A.C.H.: Transforming lives and creating partnerships,” by Child Care Services Association. p. 1. Copyright 2015 by Child Care Services Association.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood project makes higher education possible for scholarship recipients by sharing the expenses incurred with the scholarship recipient, the recipient’s employer, and the T.E.A.C.H. program. During the first year in North Carolina, 21 early childhood teachers took advantage of the scholarship opportunity. Today the North Carolina model is licensed and implemented through non-profit organizations in 24 states serving an average of 20,000 early childhood teachers. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood serves as a national

model and has seen transformative results for, “the individual recipient, their families, their employers, the children in their care, the institutions of higher education where they learn, and the communities where they work and live” (Child Care Services Association, 2015c, p. 1).

Research has supported the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project and organizations that have T.E.A.C.H. licensure recognize the positive impact professional development has had on the workforce opportunities within their state (Child Care Services Association, 2009b; DiBrito, Carrera and Wallace, 2012; Miller & Bogatova, 2009). In 2014, these impacts included an 8% raise in compensation for early childhood teachers, 6% or less turnover reported for T.E.A.C.H. recipients, and 15,622 active T.E.A.C.H. scholars working towards credentials and degrees (Child Care Services Association, 2015b, p. 1). Further, research has highlighted success as the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood project has licensed itself to other nonprofit organizations to be housed in 24 different states. Researchers have noted this success and studied its model as a way for states to address widely held social issues. Kerlin (2010) noted in a qualitative study that the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood project has seen success state to state and due to its design, has allowed the project to be “easy to travel yet still retain it’s integrity” (p. 494).

Summary

Over the years, the CDA Credential has seen many changes. Changes in the organizations overseeing the credential, as well as changes in the process of how a candidate receives a CDA credential are among the most relevant. Recently, with early childhood education on the national forefront, the emphasis on the professional development of teachers of young children still arises as a complex but worthwhile national issue (Department of Health and Human Services, 2011). Quality Rating Improvement Systems in most states and scholarship programs such as T.E.A.C.H work towards educating the early childhood workforce and

recognizing their efforts through the competency based credential of the CDA. CDA 2.0 was designed to usher the credential and process into the future of early childhood teacher professionalism. With each new development of the CDA credential, the hope is that the credential is still reaching it's initial goal, which is to help "raise the bar" in the early childhood profession and recognize the necessary competencies for an individual responsible for the education of young children. The Child Development Associate credential provides a necessary beginning step in the formal education of many early childhood educators in the United States. Taking a closer look into the impact of the CDA 2.0 changes deserves close attention by those concerned with the professional development systems in use that affect many early childhood teachers each year.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to assess the impact CDA 2.0 has had on the success rate of CDA Candidates using a mixed methods sequential research design. In mixed methods research, a study contains “elements of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 5). Further, mixed methods research employs studies that are “products of the pragmatist paradigm and that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches within different phases of the research process” (p. 22). Mixed methods sequential design allows the researcher to build one data set on the results of the other by first analyzing a set of data and then using the following data to further explain and examine the results. In order to advance knowledge in regards to a specific question, the researcher allow results of one method to inform the other method (Collins & O’Cathain, 2009).

Sequential Design

Research supports sequential mixed methods studies as an “approach to knowledge that considers numerous perspectives within a single study, and draws upon both qualitative and quantitative traditions” (Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2014, p. 2). This research design allows the researcher to analyze “sequentially using the results obtained through one approach as a starting point for the analysis of other data with the alternative approach” (Tasshakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p. 126). In the current study, the researcher will analyze quantitative data and then apply qualitative data to better understand the potential impact changes in the credentialing process may have made on CDA candidates.

Mixed methods research is becoming more and more well-known and considered the third most popular research approach or paradigm following the traditions of quantitative and

qualitative research (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner, 2007). However, unless mixed methodology researchers pay careful attention to both the priority and implementation of the data collection, the research design might be flawed from its inception (Lopez-Fernandez and Molina, 2011). Thus, this study places the priority first on the quantitative data being collected, and secondly on the qualitative. The implementation of the data collection will be sequential in that the quantitative data will be collected first with the qualitative data collection to follow. Further, this study involves the collection of existing data regarding CDA candidate credentialing rates to be followed by interviews of CDA candidates. This approach is provided in order to better understand the candidate's experiences in working towards acquisition of their teaching credential. Furthermore, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the CDA 2.0 credentialing system may help shape public policy, as well as initiatives to further the professional development of early childhood educators in the United States.

Data Collection

Candidates who have participated in the T.E.A.C.H Early Childhood Scholarship Program were analyzed in this study.¹ Three states were selected using convenience sampling, based on their agreeability to participate, as well as the need to represent a variety of geographical areas within the United States. The three states chosen for this study were Florida, Iowa, and Texas. Florida and Iowa were selected due to the large number of scholarship recipients who matriculate each year and Texas was chosen because the research is taking place there.

¹ The Council for Professional Recognition declined to participate in this study and were not willing to share data, even if the researcher paid to retrieve existing data sets.

Prior to commencement of the study, emails were sent to the five T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Program Administrators requesting their participation in the study; three responded in agreement. After receiving approval from the Program Administrators, all data, including request letters, interview questions, and other required materials were submitted to the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Comparing the Success Rates of CDA Candidates Before and After CDA 2.0

Upon receiving approval from each T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Program Administrator, demographic data was collected, including the number of CDA credential seekers that were both awarded and denied within the previous 3 years and 10 months. Table 4 highlights the four groups that were represented from each state, enabling the researcher to analyze the impact that CDA 2.0 has had on the success rates of CDA candidates. Success rates for each state were determined by dividing the number of credential awardees by the number of credential seekers.

Table 4

Comparing the Success Rates of CDA Candidates Before and After CDA 2.0

Data Set Number	Time Frame of Credentials Awarded/Denied	Credentialing System
1	June 1 2011– May 31, 2012	CDA Direct Assessment System
2	June 1, 2012 – May 31, 2013	CDA Direct Assessment System
3	June 1, 2013 – May 31, 201	CDA 2.0 System
4	June 1, 2014 – April 1, 2014	CDA 2.0 System

Interviewing CDA Credential Seekers

After analyzing the success rates of each of the three states, it was intended that 30 phone interviews would be conducted to follow up with CDA candidates who have completed the CDA credentialing process. However, only 11 early childhood professionals participated in the study.

The telephone interviews serve as the secondary data source for this study. Often in qualitative research, interviews provide in-depth information from participant’s perspectives. Information gained from interviews can be paired with other types of data collection in order to ensure for broad collection of data for analysis (Turner, 2010). For this reason, a standardized, open-ended interview was used to determine the impact CDA 2.0 had on CDA credential seekers. The standardized, open ended interview questions utilized were highly structured in that each interviewee was asked the same questions but open ended in terms of wording of the question (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). It was intended that, in each state, three participants would be recruited through the T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship program; these would be students who have completed the Direct Assessment System. Three participants who utilized the CDA 2.0 system would also be chosen from each state. However, of the 11 participants all of the early childhood professionals were from Texas. Eight of the 11 participants had received their credential through the CDA 2.0 system. The participants were invited to participate in the study through an email sent from their respective T.E.A.C.H. program. Table 5 provides additional information on the open-ended structure of the planned interviews.

Table 5

Structured, Open Ended Interview Questions of CDA Credential Seekers

Question Number	Interview Question
1.	What is your name?
2.	How long have you been an early childhood professional?
3.	What age children do you teach?
4.	What type of early childhood center do you work at?
5.	Why did you decide to pursue your CDA credential?

6.	Describe your Verification Visit.
7.	What was your experience with the CDA Exam?
8.	What have your interactions been like with the Council for Professional Recognition?
9.	Where did you receive your professional education?
10.	Did you feel prepared for the CDA process? Explain why or why not.
11.	Did you receive your CDA Credential? What was your experience?
12.	Would you recommend a CDA credential to other early childhood professionals? Why or Why not?

Data Analysis of Interviews

The responses of the telephone interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The first phase in qualitative content analysis involved the researcher creating a system to condense raw data into categories based on valid inference and interpretation (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used initial research findings from the telephone interviews to guide coding. The second phase of qualitative content analysis involves data display (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data displays are tools that articulate the summary of the findings in order for researchers to draw conclusions based on the data (Alexander, 2004).

Additionally the researcher concluded the current study by conducting a member check. A member check is best described as a phase of research during which, “the provisional report (case) is taken back to the site and subjected to the scrutiny of the persons who provided the information” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 236). Member checks allow for not only factual and interpretive accuracy, but also serve as a test of credibility in a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Cho and Trent (2006) stated that member checks provide additional validity to qualitative research and offer interviewees the opportunity to share additional feedback, re-

clarify points or arguments, and provide the researcher additional information as needed.

Arguments have been made that member checks not only allow for feedback, but also the process provides more than just a representation of the interviewees' experiences; consequently, member checks offer a deeper understanding and acknowledgement of experience, which can also lead to change (Koelsch, 2013).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact the Child Development Associate Credential 2.0 has had on candidate success rates. The research question guiding this study was: What impacts, if any, have CDA 2.0 changes had on the success rates of CDA candidates? The success rates were determined by reviewing the credentialing rates of TEACH Early Childhood Scholarship recipients in three states. Additionally, through the use of semi-structured interviews, eleven early childhood educators shared their experiences regarding the credentialing process.

Chapter Overview

This chapter describes the results obtained from the methods of research and data collection outlined in Chapter 3. The results in this mixed methods sequential design are best reported in two sections. This chapter opens with an analysis of the success rates of CDA Credential seekers using the direct assessment system, as well as the CDA 2.0 system. Tables and demographics are used to describe the success rates, and following, in section two, a discussion of the primary themes from the semi-structured interviews is presented. Three primary themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews; these were (1) the importance of a CDA professional education, (2) the support of the Professional Development Specialist, and (3) components of the CDA exam.

Quantitative Data Analysis

An analysis of existing data sets provided by three different states (Texas, Florida, Iowa), offering the TEACH Early Childhood Scholarship program were utilized to compare the success rates before and after the implementation of CDA 2.0. Florida and Iowa were selected due to the

large number of scholarship recipients who matriculate each year and Texas was chosen because the current research is taking place there. Demographic information was also provided by each of the TEACH Early Childhood programs.

Success Rates of CDA Credential Seekers in Iowa

In Iowa, the sample represented 291 scholarship awardees seeking a CDA Credential.

Overall, 279 applicants were awarded a CDA credential in Iowa over the four year period.

Demographic data from Iowa is presented in Tables 6-11.

Table 6

Iowa Teach Scholarship Success Rates

Data Set Number	Time Frame of Credentials Awarded/Denied	Credentialing System	Frequency Awarded / Total Applicants	Success Rates
1	June 1 2011– May 31, 2012	CDA Direct Assessment System	81/ 83	98%
2	June 1, 2012 – May 31, 2013	CDA Direct Assessment System	120/128	94%
3	June 1, 2013 – May 31, 2014	CDA 2.0 System	43/44	98%
4	June 1, 2014 – April 1, 2015	CDA 2.0 System	35/36	97%

Table 7

Gender Distribution of Iowa Teach Scholarship Awardees

Data Set Number	Number of TEACH Awardees	Frequency of Females	Frequency of Males	Percentage of Females	Percentage of Males
1	83	82	1	99%	1%
2	128	124	4	97%	3%
3	44	43	1	98%	2%
4	36	36		100%	0%

Table 8

Ethnicity of TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Iowa

Data Set Number	Black (Frequency)	White (Frequency)	Hispanic (Frequency)	Other / No Response (Frequency)
1	2% (2)	93% (77)	8% (7)	
2	9% (11)	89% (114)	12% (15)	2% (2)
3	7% (3)	91% (40)	2% (1)	2% (1)
4	8% (3)	92% (33)	16% (6)	

Note. Participants could select multiple ethnicities.

Table 9

Positions of TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Iowa

Data Set Number	Family Home Provider (Frequency)	Assistant Teacher (Frequency)	Teacher (Frequency)	Assistant Director (Frequency)	Director (Frequency)	Other (Frequency)
1	8% (7)	45% (37)	29% (24)	6% (5)	12% (15)	0%
2	9% (12)	65% (83)	21% (27)	0	3% (4)	1% (2) (Home Visitors)
3	18% (8)	61% (27)	18% (8)	2% (1)	0%	
4	3% (1)	58% (21)	36% (13)			3% (1) (High School CDA Program)

Table 10

Age Groups Taught by TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Iowa

Data Set	Birth – 12 months (Frequency)	1 year olds (Frequency)	2 year Olds (Frequency)	3 year Olds (Frequency)	4 year Olds (Frequency)	5 year Olds (Frequency)	After School Program (Frequency)
1	24% (20)	27% (22)	27% (22)	69% (57)	75% (62)	69% (57)	17% (14)
2	22% (28)	27% (35)	27% (35)	88% (112)	82% (105)	82% (105)	11% (14)
3	32% (14)	45% (20)	45% (20)	93% (41)	84% (37)	80% (35)	14% (6)
4	14% (5)	36% (13)	36% (13)	66% (24)	66% (24)	75% (27)	3% (1)

Note. Respondents could check all age groups with which they work.

Data was collected from the Iowa TEACH Early Childhood program in order to determine the impact that CDA 2.0 had on the success rates of candidates. Demographics were also collected to gain an understanding of who the early childhood teachers were that received

the scholarships. In Iowa, the success rates of CDA candidates increased after the implementation of CDA 2.0. However, the number of scholarship awardees went down considerably after the system changes. The early childhood teachers who received the scholarships were mostly females and the majority were also white. During each of the four years, teacher’s assistants were the most likely job classification to work towards receiving a CDA credential. In addition, the majority of the early childhood teachers represented in the Iowa TEACH Early Childhood Program worked with children 3-5 years of age.

Success Rates of Credential Seekers in Florida

In Florida, the sample represented 798 scholarship awardees seeking a CDA Credential. Overall, 712 applicants were awarded a CDA credential in Florida over a three year period. Unfortunately, the Florida TEACH program was unable to share the fourth data set representing June 1, 2014 through May 31, 2015 during the final phases of the study. The findings of Florida’s CDA credential seekers and demographics are provided in Tables 11-15.

Table 11

Florida TEACH Scholarship Recipient Success Rates

Data Set Number	Time Frame of Credentials Awarded/Denied	Credentialing System	Frequency Awarded / Total Applicants	Success Rates
1	June 1 2011– May 31, 2012	CDA Direct Assessment System	186/204	91%
2	June 1, 2012 – May 31, 2013	CDA Direct Assessment System	273/312	88%
3	June 1, 2013 – May 31, 2014	CDA 2.0 System	253/282	90%

Table 12

Gender Distribution of TEACH Florida Scholarship Recipients

Data Set Number	Number of TEACH Awardees	Frequency of Females	Frequency of Males	Percentage of Females	Percentage of Males
1	204	203	1	99%	.5%
2	312	312		100%	0%
3	282	279	3	99%	1%

Table 13

Ethnicity of TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Florida

Data Set Number	Black (Frequency)	White (Frequency)	Hispanic (Frequency)	Asian (Frequency)	American Indian (Frequency)	Pacific Islander (Frequency)	Multi-Race (Frequency)	Not Listed (Frequency)	No Response (Frequency)
1	18% (36)	30% (62)	47% (95)	1% (3)		.4% (1)		3% (7)	
2	23% (71)	23% (71)	32% (101)	1% (4)	.3% (1)		.3% (1)	20% (63)	
3	6% (18)	6% (16)	27% (75)		.4% (1)			60% (169)	.4% (1)

Table 14

Positions of TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Florida

Data Set Number	Assistant Teacher (Frequency)	Teacher (Frequency)	Assistant Director (Frequency)	Director (Frequency)	Other (Frequency)	No Response (Frequency)
1	42% (87)	51% (104)	1% (3)	4% (9)	.5% (1) (High School Teacher)	
2	39% (123)	51% (158)	1% (3)	7% (23)	.3% (1) (Ed. Coord.)	1% (4)
3	44% (124)	46% (131)	2% (5)	8% (22)		

Note. In Florida, no family home providers were awarded scholarships during this period.

Table 15

Age Groups Taught by TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Florida

Data Set	Birth – 12 Months (Frequency)	1 year olds (Frequency)	2 year Olds (Frequency)	3 year Olds (Frequency)	4 year Olds (Frequency)	5 year Olds (Frequency)	After School Program (Frequency)
1	31% (63)	31% (64)	56% (114)	73% (149)	73% (149)	8% (17)	6% (12)
2	23% (73)	28% (86)	40% (126)	53% (165)	60% (187)	39% (122)	5% 16
3	23% (65)	38% (106)	42% (118)	60% (172)	60% (169)	54% (153)	6% (17)

Note. Respondents could check all of the age groups with which they work.

Data was collected from the Florida TEACH Early Childhood program in order to determine the impact that CDA 2.0 had on the success rates of candidates. Demographics were also collected to gain an understanding of who the early childhood teachers were that received the scholarships. In Florida, the success rate of CDA credential seekers increased with the

implementation of CDA 2.0. Yet again, in Florida the number of awardees under the new system declined. The TEACH Early Childhood scholarship awardees in Florida were mostly female, with male early childhood teachers representing only 4 of 712 early childhood teachers awarded. Hispanic early childhood teachers represented the largest ethnic group in Florida with the exception that during the third year represented in the study 169 scholarship awardees selected that their ethnicity was not listed as an option on the demographics questionnaire. In Florida, the majority of the scholarship awardees positions were classified as teachers in early childhood classrooms with the majority of them working with children 3 to 4 years of age.

Success Rates of Credential Seekers in Texas

In Texas, the sample represented 137 scholarship awardees seeking a CDA Credential through the TEACH program. Overall, 135 applicants were awarded a CDA credential in Texas over a four year period. The findings of Texas’ CDA credential seekers and demographics are presented in Tables 16-20.

Table 16

Texas TEACH Scholarship Awardee Success Rates

Data Set Number	Time Frame of Credentials Awarded/Denied	Credentialing System	Frequency Awarded/ Total Applicants	Success Rates
1	June 1 2011– May 31, 2012	CDA Direct Assessment System	17/17	100%
2	June 1, 2012 – May 31, 2013	CDA Direct Assessment System	85/86	99%
3	June 1, 2013 – May 31, 2014	CDA 2.0 System	17/18	94%
4	June 1, 2014 – April 1, 2015	CDA 2.0 System	16/16	100%

Table 17

Gender Distribution of TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Texas

Data Set Number	Number of TEACH Awardees	Percentage of Females	Percentage of Males
1	17	100%	0%
2	85	100%	0%
3	17	100%	0%
4	16	100%	0%

Table 18

Ethnicity of TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Texas

Data Set Number	Black (Frequency)	White (Frequency)	Hispanic (Frequency)	Middle Eastern (Frequency)	Asian (Frequency)
1	12% (2)	47% (8)	41% (7)	0%	0%
2	27% (23)	41% (35)	33% (28)	0%	0%
3	28% (5)	55% (10)	16% (3)	0%	0%
4	19% (3)	50% (8)	12% (2)	6% (1)	12% (2)

Table 19

Positions of TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Texas

Data Set Number	Family Home Provider	Assistant Teacher (Frequency)	Teacher (Frequency)	Assistant Director (Frequency)	Director (Frequency)	Other (Frequency)
1	%	24% (4)	71% (12)	%	6% (1)	%
2	7% (6)	26% (22)	67% (58)	%	%	%
3	6% (1)	22% (4)	72% (13)	%	%	%
4	%	12% (2)	88% (14)	%	%	%

Table 20

Age Groups Taught by TEACH Scholarship Awardees in Texas

Data Set	Infants and Toddlers	Preschool	Infant Toddler and Preschool	Preschool and School Age	Infant Toddler / Preschool/ School Age
1	12% (2)	82% (14)		6% (1)	
2	15% (13)	73% (63)	5% (4)	3% (3)	3% (3)
3	22% (4)	72% (13)			6% (1)
4	31% (5)	69% (11)			

Note. Respondents could check all of the age groups with which they work.

Data was collected from the Texas TEACH Early Childhood program in order to determine the impact that CDA 2.0 had on the success rates of candidates. Demographics were also collected to gain an understanding of who the early childhood teachers were that received the scholarships. In Texas, the success rates of candidates declined with the implementation of CDA 2.0 as did the number of CDA scholarship awardees. The year that the TEACH Early

Childhood program in Texas provided the highest number of CDA scholarships was the year before the implementation of CDA 2.0. The Texas sample of early childhood teachers did not represent any males. The majority of the early childhood teachers participating in the TEACH Early Childhood scholarship program were white and most likely to teach preschool age children.

Quantitative Data Summary

Quantitative data was collected in order to assess the impact that the implementation of CDA 2.0 had on candidate success rates. In addition, demographic information was collected in order to gain a better understanding of who the early childhood teachers were that received the TEACH Early Childhood scholarships. Iowa, Florida, and Texas TEACH Early Childhood programs awarded scholarships to 1,214 early childhood teachers during the time of this study. Two out of the three TEACH Early Childhood programs saw candidate's success rates increase as a result of the CDA 2.0 credentialing process. In Iowa and Florida, the percentage rates of credential seekers increased from 120/128 (94%) to 43/44 (98%) and from 273/312 (88%) to 253/282 (90%) respectively. In Texas' TEACH Early Childhood program there was a slight decline in candidacy success rates from 85/86 (99%) to 17/18 (94%) in the program year that CDA 2.0 was implemented. However, this percentage represents one candidate who was denied a credential each year. Additionally, in each of the three states less candidates overall received scholarships in the year that CDA 2.0 was implemented.

Qualitative Data Analysis

In sequential mixed methods studies, one set of data lends support to another (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Therefore, qualitative data in the form of semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to gain a better understanding and give a voice to CDA credential holders.

Eleven early childhood teachers were interviewed for this study. Although recruitment efforts were conducted in three states; the interviewees who participated in this study were from Texas.

Semi-Structured Interview Participants

This section presents the findings of the primary themes that developed from semi-structured interviews of 11 early childhood educators who, at one time, had worked towards acquiring their CDA Credential. Eight of the early childhood teachers had gone through the credentialing process under the CDA 2.0 system and 3 had received credentials through the Direct Assessment credentialing system. The early childhood teachers interviewed were employed in private childcare centers in the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolitan area caring for children birth to five years of age. The teachers represented a vast diversity of experience in the field of early childhood education. The range of years of experience was 4 to 26 years with the average teacher interviewed having 12 years of experience working with young children. While all of the teachers interviewed were female, they did represent a fairly diverse group of individuals representing Caucasian, African-American, and Hispanic ethnicities. Additionally, the teachers represented both urban and more rural areas surrounding the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The following subsections represent the three major themes that emerged from the semi structured interviews.

CDA Professional Education

Consistent with the literature was the importance and value that early childhood professionals received from their professional education in preparation to apply for the CDA Credential (CFPR, 2014; Heisner, & Lederberg, 2011; Washington, 2013). One of the most relevant themes related to having a CDA professional education. The early childhood teachers interviewed consistently shared they had wanted to receive a credential so they could further

their education and advance their career. One of the teachers shared her perspective and gave an overview of the impact of her professional education. “You get so much from class and really grow as a teacher. You start to better understand your children and it makes you a better teacher” (D.A.3, Q 12, July 20, 2015).

Another teacher agreed with the importance of her professional education and mentioned that it helped clarify best practices in a developmentally appropriate learning environment. The teacher specifically shared that for her, the education component helped her, “understand why we do what we do” (2.0-6, Q5, July 24, 2015).

Teachers also explained the important role that the CDA class instructors had played in advancing their professional development. Participants who received their professional education at a community college and a child care resource and referral agency shared that the instructors had played an important role in not only teaching them about classroom practices, but also in preparing them for the process of how to later get their CDA credential. In each state, all of the teachers interviewed felt that they were prepared for the CDA credentialing process. Whether they had received their credential under the Direct Assessment System or under CDA 2.0, the teachers interviewed agreed they felt prepared to be observed in their classrooms and to take their CDA exams. One teacher shared a common comment when it came to discussing feeling prepared with “My teacher was great!” (2.0-2, Q10, July 30, 2015).

One seasoned early childhood professional shared another common value among the interview participants. During her interview she shared again and again, how important it had been for her to obtain her CDA credential so that she could further her career, enhance her education, and become a better teacher for the children she worked with. She believed in the importance of continuing the professional process and shared time and again as she discussed her

experiences getting her CDA credential, “This was really serious to me” (2.0-2, Q 12, July 30, 2015).

Early childhood teachers also made frequent comments regarding the necessity of a funding source to assist with the high costs associated with being a CDA candidate. Five of the eleven participants had received scholarships through the Texas Workforce Commission; these scholarships paid for the cost of attending the CDA Professional Education classes, the CDA Assessment Fee, and had also provided a \$1,000 stipend for participants who finished the CDA Professional Education classes and were applying for a CDA Credential. One proud early childhood assistant director shared during an interview that she wished there were more scholarship opportunities for early childhood professionals to receive their CDA. She also shared that when she heard about the opportunity for her staff members to apply for scholarships, she helped them with the process.

Professional Development Specialist Support and Visit

Before 2013, the way in which CDA candidates were observed was vastly different prior to the implementation of CDA 2.0. While most of the teachers seeking their CDA credential shared similar experiences, there was a key difference between those obtaining their credential under the Direct Assessment system and CDA 2.0. Specifically, the most varying aspect for CDA Credential seekers was the implementation of the Professional Development Specialist under the CDA 2.0 system.

While teachers from both credentialing systems reported that the overall process was pleasant, one of the largest differences was highlighted by a teacher who received her credential under the older direct assessment system. She shared, “It was pretty easy, and my old boss did the observation. I’ve heard it’s really different now” (D.A.2, Q6, July 24, 2015). This teacher’s

observation is quite accurate. While classroom observations do continue to take place, the policies in place determining who the Professional Development Specialist can be, guidelines naming more specific situations or “dual relationships” that should be avoided are provided, and there is an online system in place to connect CDA candidates with Professional Development Specialists.

For the teachers interviewed, one thing was specifically apparent. The specialist they chose had a meaningful impact on their professional development experience. Most of the CDA candidates shared that they were quite nervous about having the observation take place in their classroom. This was mostly due to the fact that they were rarely observed by anyone that they didn't know with the infrequent exception of childcare licensing visits. One CDA candidate, who is now a director of an early childhood center, shared that on the day of her PD Specialist visit she was a, “nervous wreck,” (2.0-4, Q 6, July 21, 2015) but followed up to say that once she completed the process and was teaching in her own classroom, she once again felt comfortable.

The teachers interviewed also shared meaningful feedback regarding the professional development specialist visits. Two teachers shared similar experiences stating that following the reflective dialogue exchange they had with the specialist, which she (the specialist) had strongly encouraged them to continue their education and enroll in a child development program at a local community college. These teachers stated that they were encouraged that they were both able to demonstrate the competencies necessary to receive a CDA, but also that a professional in the field recognized qualities within them that could make them successful to continue their education.

The impact of the professional development specialists did not stop there. Teachers continued to share regarding the care and commitment the specialists had during the

credentialing visit. One infant teacher's positive experience with during her specialist visit exemplifies a positive and collaborative experience facilitated by a seasoned professional:

“My visit went so smooth. I was nervous but once I got in my room and I saw my babies I knew it was going to be okay. What I didn't know would happen is that the PD specialist would not only be excited to see my infant room but would also love my environment. The PD Specialist kept saying things to me during the reflective dialogue like, “This is what it's supposed to look like!” She asked me if she could take pictures of my environment to share with other infant teachers. She took pictures of my room before she left. I'd never felt so proud” (2.0-7, Q6, July 24, 2015).

The majority of participants agreed that the Professional Development Specialist visit had gone very well, but two candidates expressed concern. CDA candidates and Professional Development Specialists typically connect through an online system (located at cdacouncil.org) to schedule a credentialing visit. In both circumstances the two study participants had understood a date the visit would take place on; however, much to their surprise, the specialist arrived on a different date. The CDA candidates were both able to complete their visits that day, but admitted it had been a bit of an inconvenience because they did not really feel ready. Additionally, the specialist not arriving on the planned-upon day could create a scheduling conflict for center staff to cover the candidate's classroom while she or he leaves her or his respective classroom in order to participate in the reflective dialogue.

CDA Exam

Another component of the CDA candidacy process that has changed significantly is the CDA Exam (Washington, 2013). Study participants had a great deal to share in regards to the

CDA Exam. The majority of the study participants (n=8) received their CDA through the new CDA 2.0 system. The remaining participants (n=3) received their CDA credential through the older direct assessment system. In the new CDA credentialing system, candidates take a computerized, timed test. In the older credentialing system candidates took a paper and pencil test proctored by a representative of the CDA council.

Direct Assessment System. Interview participants on the older system agreed that it was a fairly straightforward test. Two out of the three candidates used the term, “pretty easy” in describing what they could remember of taking the CDA exam. One CDA credential holder shared her experience. “The CDA exam must have been fairly easy because I don’t really seem to remember much of it. I think if it had been too difficult I probably would have remembered” (D.A.2, Q7, July 24, 2015).

CDA 2.0 Exam. Participants taking the CDA 2.0 Exam had a great deal to share in regards to their personal experiences. This group of interviewees also had the advantage of taking the test more recently, which likely proved to be helpful in recollecting their experiences. All in all, the interviewees felt they had positive experiences with taking their CDA test. While one participant did report being extremely nervous of taking the test, she also commented that is generally her nature and not necessarily any one particular thing or incident that happened in regards to receiving her CDA credential.

An early childhood teacher shared her experience with the CDA 2.0 exam which echoed the experience of several of the other CDA candidates:

The test was interesting. Some of the questions they asked; different answers might work depending on the children’s preferences that you are working with that year. Sometimes I would think about different children that I have had over the years and try to decide

what might work best for one child might not work best for the others. At the end, I just tried to go with what I thought was the better answer. When I finished it was nerve wracking because at the end of the test you don't know how you did. I wish there had been a number at the end so I would know how I did on the test" (2.0-8, Q7, July 30, 2015).

Another CDA candidate shared her relief when she realized she would be comfortable with the test administered on a computer rather than with pencil and paper. She reflected on her feelings of relief after taking the test:

"The test was pretty good. It really made you think, though. Some of the scenarios could really have gone either way, so I just didn't know. The test really kept me on my toes. To be honest, I don't really do computers. But, this was okay. There were good step by step instructions that took me every step of the way and told me how to take the test. I was so glad" (2.0-1, Q7, July 30, 2015).

Overall, CDA candidates that participated in the study agreed that the computerized exam was, for the most part, user friendly. Two of the candidates did admit as they discussed the usability of the CDA Exam that the review options were confusing and that because some of the questions had been, in their words, "trick questions", the CDA candidates had found it necessary to go back and review the answers.

Qualitative Data Summary

The capstone question of the semi-structured interview questions was, "Would you recommend a CDA credential to other early childhood professionals?" The answers received were a unanimous, "yes." In fact, one of the more experienced CDA credential holders shared

that based on her experience, “when you look for a new job, you need it” (D.A.2, Q12, July 24, 2015).

Similarly, another early childhood teacher who agreed that she would recommend the credential to another teacher shared a common phrase echoed by the CDA Council in regards to the CDA Credential. The Council for Professional Recognition often refers to the CDA Credential as an early childhood teacher’s best first step in continuing their professional development. The early childhood teacher described her experience:

I recommend getting a CDA to teachers all the time. It really IS your best first step. It gives you more and more ideas of what you want to do and what you might do with your career. Getting a CDA helps point you towards college, even if you didn’t know that was where you could go (2.0-8, Q12, July 30, 2015).

CDA 2.0 has changed in many ways from the previous Direct Assessment System. While the success rates of the credential seekers obtaining their CDA’s have not seen momentous changes, from candidate perspectives, the changes implemented have had an impact on their personal experiences of receiving their CDA credential. It is the experience of the CDA credential seekers that their experiences were largely shaped by the CDA Professional Education, the Professional Development Specialist Visits, and the CDA Exam.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This mixed methods sequential study (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) examined the effect that the implementation of CDA 2.0 has had on CDA candidate success rates. Quantitative methods were employed to determine the success rates of CDA candidates in three states participating in the TEACH early childhood program. Data was analyzed and overall success rates were determined by finding the percentages of CDA candidates that had received or were denied their CDA Credential. Additionally, qualitative methods were used to explore the discourse of eleven early childhood teachers who had worked towards getting their CDA credential. The current study was interested in interviewing a CDA candidate who had not received a CDA Credential, but was unable to locate a candidate denied the credential to interview. Data for the semi-structured interviews was collected, transcribed, and then coded based on the theoretical framework of Lincoln and Guba (1985).

The findings of this study convey the success rates of CDA Candidates under the new CDA 2.0 credentialing system and offer distinct perspectives in regards to the process changes and experiences of CDA Candidates working towards their CDA Credential under the current credentialing system. The study identified ways that CDA 2.0 has been successful and some ways in which the process could potentially have some areas for growth.

Summary of Study

One primary research questions guided this study: What impacts, if any, have the CDA 2.0 changes had on the success rates of CDA candidates? Analyzing the success rates of CDA credential seekers being awarded their CDA before and after the implementation of CDA 2.0 highlighted that in fact the implementation of CDA 2.0 had impacted success rates in a positive

way. To support this information, qualitative data was collected and three primary themes emerged from semi-structured interviews. These were (1) the relevance of a professional education, (2) support of the professional development specialist during the visit, and (3) the CDA Exam.

Candidate Success Rates

Two out of the three TEACH Early Childhood programs saw candidate's success rates increase as a result of the CDA 2.0 credentialing process. In Iowa and Florida, the percentage rates of credential seekers increased by 4% and 2% respectively. In Texas' TEACH Early Childhood program there was a slight decline in candidacy success rates of 5% in the program year that CDA 2.0 was implemented. However, this percentage represents one candidate who was denied a credential that year. Reviewing the numbers of the study also highlights that in each of the three states, less candidates received scholarships in the year that CDA 2.0 was implemented. This could be partly due to the fact that some people might have either felt uncomfortable with the new process or avoided applying for both the scholarship and the credential. Likewise, the success rates of scholarship recipients might also have remained fairly consistent due to the fact that for the most part the potential CDA candidates who felt most comfortable with the new process changes were the same CDA candidates that followed through with applying and receiving scholarships.

Regardless, the question remains, why might candidate success rates have increased in two out of the three states the year following the implementation of CDA 2.0? This study offers three potential reasons why the success rates might have increased for the TEACH Early Childhood scholarship recipients: (1) TEACH programs supported candidates through the new process, (2) CDA instructors were likely to have helped prepare students through the transition,

and (3) little information is known regarding the passing score of the CDA Exam, if there is a score that one must achieve.

TEACH early childhood programs support students that receive TEACH Scholarships. Each scholarship recipient, as part of the national TEACH Early Childhood model is assigned a TEACH Counselor to help the student, in this particular case also a CDA candidate navigate the process of obtaining a CDA. TEACH Counselors remain in contact with CDA candidates, monitoring the progress that they are making and providing additional support as necessary. During the year of multiple process changes taking place during the implementation of CDA 2.0, it is highly likely that the successful TEACH Early Childhood program rose to the occasion by providing additional support (Child Care Services Association, 2015a)

Furthermore, during the implementation phases of CDA 2.0, CDA professional education programs were working towards understanding the new processes and passing along this valuable information to students. Prior to the implementation of CDA 2.0 the Council for Professional Recognition did (from this study's perspective) an exceptional job of sharing information via the website cdacouncil.org in order to share information with CDA Candidates, Instructors, and program administrators. Online tools provided included a Guide to CDA 2.0 as well as a printable and easy to read graph that laid out quite simply the similarities and differences of CDA 2.0 and the CDA Direct Assessment System. It is this study's belief that the online tools available were useful and that the tools provided did assist programs and candidates in implementing CDA 2.0.

Professional Education

The first theme that emerged from the semi-structured interviews was the relevance of a professional education to the CDA candidates who participated in the study. All of the

experiences described by the CDA candidates in reference to their 120 hours of professional education was extremely positive. Candidates shared how the professional education they received had been very meaningful to them. They had learned a great deal to better prepare them to work with young children. Interestingly enough, the CDA candidates who participated in the study had all received their professional education through either a community college or the local Dallas Fort-Worth Child Care Resource and Referral Agency. The CDA candidates receiving their professional education in both of these settings had positive comments to say about both their instructors as well as the program delivery. However, considerations must be made for CDA candidates who did not have positive experiences during their professional education.

While the Council for Professional Recognition does provide guidance for CDA programs as to the specific program requirements that the professional education must meet, very little oversight takes place to oversee that the programs do provide high quality and meaningful professional education for CDA Candidates. In fact, the job of validating the CDA candidates' professional education relies heavily on the Professional Development Specialist which they have chosen. During the time of the Professional Development Specialist Visit, the specialist checks the candidates CDA professional education certificate or certificates to ensure that they are indeed valid and applicable. The Professional Development Specialist may or may not be familiar with CDA professional education programs in order to validate them. Additionally, little information is shared with the early childhood community in regards to what the specialists might approve or not in the terms of professional education.

Furthermore, most early childhood professionals are familiar with the fact that there are CDA Professional Education programs that are frequently thought of as high quality and those

also that are thought of as fairly low quality programs. This elicits the question, what is the process for a CDA Professional Education program to be allowed to issue a certificate? In conclusion, in regards to the professional education component for CDA candidates, it is validating to learn that many CDA candidates do have positive experiences; however, there is likely work to be continued in the area of the monitoring of programs that provide CDA professional education.

Professional Development Specialist Visits

The second theme that emerged from the semi-structured interviews related to the Professional Development Specialist Visits. Early childhood professionals involved in the process of verifying CDA candidates competency based credential play an important role for credential seekers. Most of the study participants experienced very constructive visits. Some of the candidates left feeling encouraged that they were doing an exceptional job and represented the high quality classrooms that CDA credential holders are known for. Professional Development Specialists more times than not served as great sources of encouragement for the candidates participating in this study. CDA candidates experienced the specialists as kind professionals who put them at ease, often inspired them to continue their education, and even took pictures of their high quality infant environments to share with other early childhood professionals. The only finding from the current study that shared a differing perspective was that of the two early childhood teachers whose specialists came to conduct the visit on a day other than the day initially scheduled. This being said, one important conclusion to draw from these perspectives is that the individual that a candidate chooses to be the specialist plays an important role in obtaining their credential. In this candidate-driven process of obtaining a CDA, the selection of the Professional Development Specialist is not chosen by the Council for

Professional Recognition, but rather by each candidate. This is likely to be a wise decision as CDA candidates continue to obtain CDA 2.0 credentials. Word of mouth regarding the experiences with Professional Development Specialists is likely to spread quickly to nervous CDA candidates, hoping for the best visit possible.

Additionally, the stricter guidelines for Professional Development Specialists is likely beneficial to CDA Candidates. The implementation of CDA 2.0 provided additional guidelines regarding who a professional development specialist could be, carefully defining dual relationships that might make it difficult for a specialist to be objective while conducting the professional development visit. The online training and exam that specialists must complete before they are appear on the registry has likely streamlined the process. Clearly, defining whom a Professional Development Specialist can be and ensuring similar training and qualifications is likely to both make the CDA credential more valid, but also to ensure that more CDA candidates are able to have positive experiences and positively impact their success.

CDA Exam

The third theme that emerged from the semi-structured involved the CDA Exam itself. The computerized CDA Exam is one component of the CDA 2.0 process that little information is shared. Multiple participants in this study highlighted one of the primary questions that the current study was also concerned with, which is how does a person know they have passed the CDA Exam? This is likely a charge for future research, but documents from the Council of Professional Recognition (located at www.cdacouncil.org) highlight that upon completion of both the CDA Exam and the Professional Development Specialist Visit, a representative from the CDA Council will review both the exam score and the results of the specialist's observation of the candidate, and then a decision will be made to either award or deny the candidate's

credential. Little information is described or shared in regards to how the CDA Council representative will make the said decision.

The Council for Professional Recognition does highlight the CDA Credential as a competency based credential, and there is no doubt that it is extremely important that a CDA Credential holder should demonstrate the competencies and skills necessary to work with young children. However, it does seem to raise a number of questions with both CDA Candidates and researchers in the field of Early Childhood to not be very clear in regards to the specific “passing grade” on the CDA Exam.

Conclusion

The Child Development Associate Credential is the largest early childhood teacher credentialing organization in the United States and serves an important role and function in the professional development of both early childhood professionals as well as the field of early childhood education too. Cited in the literature (Washington, 2013) and quoted by CDA candidates in this study, the CDA Credential serves as the best first step in professional development for many early childhood professionals. The findings of the current study echo this sentiment and suggest the CDA Credential provides an important professional development opportunity for early childhood professionals and the children and families that they serve.

Implications for Policy

Council for Professional Recognition

The Council for Professional Recognition is tasked with managing a complex and no doubt, difficult charge. CDA 2.0 provides a credentialing process and professional development opportunity to many early childhood teachers that according to this study, they find both

purposeful and meaningful to their continued efforts to best serve young children and families. That being said, there are a few areas that could likely benefit from improvement.

The CDA 2.0 computerized exam raises some questions. One question is how exactly is a determination made to credential a CDA Candidate, if there is indeed a passing score or not, and if so, what constitutes a passing score? It is the belief of the current study that clearing up many of the questions regarding the CDA 2.0 exam would likely make it a more straightforward process. Additional details could be provided by the Council for Professional Recognition through the website www.cdacouncil.org. A toolkit for CDA instructors and professional education program managers would also be useful in helping students achieve success in regards to the CDA 2.0 Exam.

Another area that would be helpful for the field of early childhood education is if the Council for Professional Recognition would be more of an “open door” agency. It would be beneficial to the field if the organization involved itself in research initiatives and once again published the *State of the CDAs* reports. In the past, before the CDA Credential was under the umbrella of the Council for Professional Recognition, periodic reports would be made available free of charge to the early childhood community. Some of the older reports are still available online through various media, but since 1994 a *State of the CDAs* report has not been issued. A *State of the CDAs* report would be beneficial to update the field of the progress and success of CDA Candidates and credential holders. While the CDA Council is not likely to participate in research initiatives other than those the agency themselves are sponsoring, it would prove beneficial if they would also participate in research through academia as well. Under the current model, the Council for Professional Recognition does offer some data to early childhood students, CDA Programs, and the like, however there is a hefty fee associated with acquiring any

information that would be likely make it difficult for many people to acquire existing data from the Council. Additionally, it could have proven beneficial for the Council for Professional Recognition to share data for this study. Though the researcher offered to pay the \$500 fee to acquire the report, the CDA Council representatives were uncomfortable with the research topic and shared that they themselves were preparing their own internal report to look into the success rates of CDA Candidates after the implementation of CDA 2.0. This raises another question; after the Council for Professional Recognition completes their report, will it ever be made public? Further, was the Council for Professional Recognition uncomfortable sharing the results of CDA Candidates because there is little oversight provided to who obtains a CDA? Or is there some other reason? The answers to these questions remain unknown.

Researchers reference the CDA credential as having a positive impact on the profession of early childhood (Bredenkamp, 2000; Heisner & Lederberg, 2011). The Council for Professional Recognition is the agency responsible for assessing this process. The intent of this study is to examine this process and is the first study of this kind.

Quality Rating Improvement Systems

Quality Rating Improvement Systems are making a difference in progressing the field of early childhood education (Kagan & Kaurez, (2012). Study participants repeatedly cited that the reason they had initially been able to continue their professional education and obtain a CDA was because they had received scholarships through Texas' QRIS. Early childhood teachers who had received financial assistance had positive experiences and were eager to promote not only the credential, but also the QRIS. The assistance is greatly needed and for five of the eleven early childhood teachers interviewed, they would not have been able to obtain their CDA without the scholarship.

Quality Rating Improvement Systems, based on this research, must carefully select the CDA Professional Education programs. Community colleges, non-profit agencies, and for-profit organizations offer CDA Professional Education. It is likely that the quality of the programs greatly impacts the experience, and eventually the success of, CDA Candidates receiving their credential. Additionally, the TEACH Early Childhood Program serves as a strong model of how to assist students through the process of receiving a CDA Credential through the TEACH Early Childhood counselor. Counselors provide support, encouragement, and often help explain processes that might at times be roadblocks for CDA Candidates in completing their credential.

Implications for Practice

CDA Professional Education Programs

CDA candidates need support in order to feel successful and meet their goals. The CDA candidates that participated in this study found instructors to be a huge level of support in their professional education. Candidates also felt better prepared to take part in the process of the professional development specialist visit and take the CDA Exam with the support of their instructors. According to study participants, the CDA professional education programs represented in this are doing an exceptional job of supporting students. Programs that find themselves lacking in this area might consider ways to enhance supports of CDA Candidates in these areas.

CDA Candidates

The Council for Professional Recognition wants the CDA process to be candidate driven (Washington, 2013). This empowers CDA candidates to truly take charge of the process of obtaining a CDA, which certainly has its benefits, but can also sometimes present a fair number of challenges as well. First and foremost, CDA Candidates need to carefully choose where they

will receive their professional education with limited guidelines enforced by the Council for Professional Recognition. It is highly important that CDA Candidates choose a reputable organization to receive their professional education. Candidates have a great deal of choices to make in where they might receive their professional education. CDA professional education programs are offered by community colleges, non-profit agencies, and for-profit organizations. The delivery and content of professional education programs differ from program to program while still meeting the requirements of the Council for Professional Recognition. Further, as these interview participants suggest, CDA candidates who might not feel limited in their technology literacy can feel somewhat at ease knowing that the study participants found the CDA exam through CDA 2.0 to be mostly manageable and user friendly. Lastly, potential CDA Candidates should know that if they are feeling hesitant to work towards a credential under the CDA 2.0 credentialing system that they should likely move forward with confidence. According to this study they are more likely to be successful under the new guidelines and implementation system.

Implications for Future Research

Possible areas for research are drawn from examination of the research question guiding this study and the information gained from the semi-structured interviews with CDA candidates. A complete assessment from the Council for Professional Recognition of all of the implications that CDA 2.0 has had on the field of early childhood education is not available. Additional research is vital to further understanding the implications of the implementation of CDA 2.0 as the Council for Professional Recognition works toward helping more and more future CDA Candidates continue their professional development.

Future research regarding the success rates of CDA candidates might include how CDA candidates' careers are impacted after receiving a CDA Credential. How many early childhood professionals move into administering programs after receiving a CDA Credential? How many are able to continue their education and receive an Associate's degree? How many are able to continue and receive a Bachelor's degree?

Future research could also examine the professional development organizations that provide CDA Professional Education. CDA Professional Education can be provided by community colleges, non-profit agencies, and for-profit organizations. With minimal guidelines, limited oversight provided by the Council for Professional Recognition, and having Professional Development Specialist validate the evidence of professional education, a myriad of future research endeavors exists.

Summary

Early childhood teacher credentialing is a rich area for future research into the professional development systems in place for early childhood educators. This study reviewed the candidate success rates from three TEACH early childhood scholarship programs and gave voice to CDA candidates regarding the credentialing process. The current study analyzed existing data sets from the TEACH Early Childhood programs of Texas, Iowa, and Florida to better understand if CDA candidate success rates had been effected by the implementation of the new process and credentialing system. The majority of the CDA candidates interviewed had received their CDA Credentials through the CDA 2.0 credentialing system.

The purpose of this study was to determine what impact if any CDA 2.0 had on the success rates of early childhood teachers seeking the CDA credential. Candidate success rates increased with the implementation of CDA 2.0 and according to CDA candidates interviewed,

the process and experience of obtaining a CDA under this new system was a positive one. Research places high importance on the need for high quality professional development for early childhood teachers (Kagan & Kaurez, 2012). The Council for Professional Recognition and CDA professional education organizations must empower CDA candidates to be successful in their pursuit of a CDA credential while also maintaining high standards and implementing quality initiatives that ensure that the credential represents a sign of quality in the field of early care and education.

The Child Development Associate Credential has been the best first step to early childhood teacher credentialing for over 350,000 early childhood teachers and through QRIS initiatives in most states the need for CDA credential holders continues. With this comes an increased focus on the impact the CDA credential has on the field of early childhood education, early childhood professionals, and the children served through CDA credential holders. Further research into the CDA Credential, the Council for Professional Recognition, and CDA 2.0 will likely prove essential for the successful implementation of QRIS systems as well as efforts to continue to professionalize the field of early childhood education. The findings demonstrate that the 2.0 system provides candidates with necessary supports to be successful. A significant question arising out of the data is how a determination is made to issue a credential. Before QRIS and public policy initiatives employ more efforts to professionalize the field of early childhood – primarily through the CDA credential – the process by which one obtains a credential should be more thoroughly examined.

APPENDIX A:
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Coding of Semi-Structured Interview Participants

Eleven early childhood teachers participated in this study. Eight of the participants had received a CDA credential through the CDA 2.0 System, the remaining three received their credential through the Direct Assessment System. For the purposes of these interview transcripts each of the participants was coded with a system indicating the type of credentialing system that they received their credential (either D.A. or 2.0) and then also a number to represent them. For example, the first early childhood teacher interviewed under the CDA 2.0 system was coded as 2.0-1. The first early childhood teacher interviewed who had received a credential through the Direct Assessment System was coded as D.A.-1. This coding system was utilized to protect the anonymity of the CDA candidates represented.

Transcripts of Semi-Structured Interview Participants

The interview transcripts will be presented by first listing the question asked and then presenting each of the 11 early childhood teacher's responses to the question. Names of any individuals described in the study as Professional Development Specialists, CDA Representatives, Directors, and other professional colleagues will not be used. Additionally, the names of the CDA Candidate's places of employment will not be listed nor will the specific location of their professional education. Question 1 of the interview transcripts will not be included, it asked for the CDA candidates' first name to be used only for record keeping purposes.

Question 2: How long have you been an early childhood professional?

2.0-1: 8 years

2.0-2: 4 years

2.0-3: 12 years

2.0-4: 15 years

2.0-5: 8 years

2.0-6: 10 years

2.0-7: 9 years

2.0-8: 8 years

D.A.-1: 26 years

D.A.-2: 16 years

D.A.-3: 20 years

Question 3: What age children do you teach?

2.0-1: I've taught infants for a long time! I guess I was in the infant room for 6 years and then I started managing the after school program too.

2.0-2: I've taught everything from birth to five. I help with the schoolers too sometimes.

2.0-3: Infants to school age. But I am really an infant teacher.

2.0-4: Infants and all the way to school age when they need me to.

2.0-5: I worked in the infant room for four years, then I bounced around a little bit. I was with the 4-5 year olds some after that. Now, I'm back with my babies again. That's where I want to be the most, I just had to tell my director, I need to be with the babies.

2.0-6: I'm an administrator now, but I have worked with the infants all the way to the 5 year olds.

2.0-7: 1 year to 18 months.

2.0-8: Infants. I will help out in the school age room, but preschool – no thank you.

D.A.-1: Preschool, I teach the 3-5 year olds. I have my preschool credential.

D.A.-2: 3-5's.

D.A.-3: I've taught birth to 5 and some after school.

Question 4: What type of early childhood center do you work at?

2.0-1: privately owned

2.0-2: privately owned

2.0-3: privately owned

2.0-4: privately owned

2.0-5: for profit, private child care

2.0-6: private center

2.0-7: private center

2.0-8: privately owned

D.A.-1: for profit

D.A.-2: private child care

D.A.-3: for profit early child care, I have worked at a church too.

Question 5: Why did you decide to pursue your CDA credential?

2.0-1: I really wanted to further my education. And when I can I really want to keep going too.

2.0-2: It was funny. Two other ladies at my center had got scholarships to start a CDA class and they backed out at the last minute. I got asked that day if I wanted to step in and take a spot and I made the decision that day that I was going to do it after I decided I had to go to my CDA class that night. And I don't regret it at all.

2.0-3: To expand my knowledge. I knew that it would better my center and that it would make the center better for the kids that go here too. So I guess, all of the above.

2.0-4: To further my career. I'm the curriculum and training coordinator now so I also need my CDA so that I can train people under my CDA.

2.0-5: Because I wanted something under my belt to show it was a profession. I want people to know I'm not just doing this because I didn't get to go to college.

2.0-6: To be more knowledgeable of best practices and what to do. Things do change sometimes and you want to be kept up with what we are supposed to do. A CDA helps you understand why we do what we do.

2.0-7: Really for two reasons. 1) To get some training because that really helps and 2) it was offered to me free so it was the wise thing to do. And, it helped me get training hours for licensing too.

2.0-8: I had gone back to school and I didn't have the momentum to finish. I got a grant to get the CDA. It's going to help me with getting back going to school.

D.A.-1: To get some more knowledge to give to staff. And it was free!

D.A.-2: I went to college and did hair at first and I hated it. Then I was a teacher's aide for a third grade class and I decided I should get an Associates in early childhood.

D.A.-3: I was an infant toddler teacher and I had the chance to get it for \$50 and I thought it would help further my career.

Question 6: Describe your Verification Visit.

2.0-1: It was all right. My babies showed up late so we had to pull some babies from another room. We didn't have a lot of babies that day so we had 3 babies and 3 teachers. I wish we would have had more kids.

2.0-2: It was good. I was nervous but it really wasn't bad. She said I did well. I don't know.

2.0-3: Short and Sweet! The day was confusing. One baby showed up so it went quicker. We had 8 babies but only 1 came that day so she said it can be shorter.

2.0-4: I was a nervous wreck! I had (name of PD Specialist). Once I got in there in the classroom I felt at home and taught the class and it was okay. She (PD Specialist) wanted me to set higher goals for myself and I am. I am going to go to college and I'm strong with my intentions.

2.0-5: It was kind of a mess. We had (name of PD Specialist). She did it. She came on a different day rather than what we had planned. We had smaller numbers that day and had moved the group for ratios. So it was different, really. But we made it.

2.0-6: It was a little crazy. She (PD Specialist) came on a different day. But after we got it all figured out we went ahead and did it and it went pretty smooth. She (PD Specialist) came and observed. We had our conversation and it was pretty smooth.

2.0-7: It was (name of PD Specialist) and it went well. She was sweet. My visit went so smooth. I was nervous but once I got in my room and I saw my babies I knew it was going to be okay. What I didn't know would happen is that the PD Specialist would not only be excited to see my infant room but would also love my environment. The PD Specialist kept saying things to me during the reflective dialogue like, "This is what it's supposed to look like!" She asked me if she could take pictures of my environment to share with other infant teachers. She took pictures of my room before she left. I'd never felt so proud.

2.0-8: Very nervous! It went well as planned. My co-teacher was really helpful that day too. It was like any other day. We had the chat and she told me I should go and get my Associates degree – I will be finishing it soon!

D.A.-1: So nervous! The lady was there in my room and she noticed everything. She saw it all. She saw my tables, my group and I felt good. She moved around and saw what was up. She told me it was a positive room.

D.A.-2: It's been so long. It was pretty easy, and my old boss did the observation. I've heard it's really different now.

D.A.-3: A (child care resource and referral agency) person came and saw me. It was pleasant, helpful. She was helpful too.

Question 7: What was your experience with the CDA Exam?

2.0-1: The test was pretty good. It really made you think, though. Some of the scenarios could really have gone either way, so I just didn't know. The test really kept me on my toes. To be honest, I don't really do computers. But, this was okay. There were good step by step instructions that took me every step of the way and told me how to take the test. I was so glad.

2.0-2: It was good too.

2.0-3: Good. They got us in early. The exam wasn't that hard there were some trick questions though. But it was easy. The computer was easy and fine.

2.0-4: There were answers that could have been 2. It was tricky. I went with the better answer. You don't know how you did at the end of it. I wish I could have known so I would know the right answers. I wish I could have known my score.

2.0-5: I took it on the computer. They got me back there and I was a little nervous. Only took me half the time. I had plenty of time. They explained the computer part pretty well. Sometimes the review option was confusing though. The only confusing part was the option on the bottom didn't match the information about finishing.

2.0-6: Fairly easy. Some questions weren't very clear and they were trying hard to trick me. I had to go back, leave it, and go back when it was a harder one.

2.0-7: They were nice. They explained it to me. It was common sense and self-explanatory too. They explained it well. I looked up about it (the CDA Exam) on line too. At first I was really nervous but I used the stuff online.

2.0-8: Interesting. The test was interesting. Some of the questions they asked different answers might work depending on the children's preferences that you are working with that year. Sometimes I would think about different children that I have had over the years and try to decide what might work best for one child might not work best for the others. At the end, I just tried to go with what I thought was the better answer. When I finished it was nerve wracking because at the end of the test you don't know how you did. I wish there had been a number at the end so I would know how I did on the test.

D.A.-1: I felt ready. We (her and her CDA Class) had knowledge based on our experience in class. And they had us practice. We met the lady to take it, I think it was multiple choice with true and false.

D.A.-2: They tested me and there was a bunch of us, I think we met at a library. That was about it. It (the CDA exam) must have been pretty fairly easy because I don't really seem to remember much of it. I think if it had been too difficult I probably would have remembered.

D.A.-3: I took the old paper test. It was pretty easy. They made it sound hard in class but it was pretty easy. I did the oral part in like 30 minutes and the written in 45.

Question 8: What have your interactions been like with the Council for Professional Recognition?

2.0-1: We got super confused. We had a hard time scheduling the test. It took 2 weeks to find out we should just call and schedule the test and not make an online profile.

2.0-2: I didn't have any.

2.0-3: Had trouble scheduling the test. We (the early childhood teachers from her center) wanted to all go together. They said they call us back in 10 minutes and never did. We ended up taking 2 weeks to talk to them again and we were not even in there system. Then we called again and then all of a sudden we were good.

2.0-4: I haven't had any. I do get the email newsletter.

2.0-5: Haven't really needed to contact.

2.0-6: Haven't had to yet. I get the newsletter.

2.0-7: Been well, it's been nice. They email me about upcoming trainings and I can ask questions.

2.0-8: I didn't talk to them. Workforce and (child care resource and referral agency) took care of it.

D.A.-1: After leaving my last job I don't have any interactions with them. The renewals have gone very easy.

D.A.-2: With renewals it gets very confusing and I have to keep up with the paperwork.

D.A.-3: I really haven't had to. I haven't renewed yet. I was confused about the CEU's issues. They had sent me a letter out, but I don't know.

Question 9: Where did you receive your professional education?

2.0-1: At (child care resource and referral agency) with a grant from (local workforce board).

2.0-2: (child care resource and referral agency)

2.0-3: (child care resource and referral agency) with a (local workforce board) grant.

2.0-4: (child care resource and referral agency) with a (local workforce board) grant.

2.0-5: (child care resource and referral agency)

2.0-6: (child care resource and referral agency)

2.0-7: (child care resource and referral agency)

2.0-8: (child care resource and referral agency)

D.A.-1: (community college)

D.A.-2: (community college)

D.A.-3: (child care resource and referral agency)

Question 10: Did you feel prepared for the CDA process? Explain why or why not.

2.0-1: Yes. We set it up what it would be like in class. We worked on our books and stuff and we knew where to call. We worked on our competency statements and stuff like that too.

2.0-2: Yes, I was very much prepared. My girls at work were helpful to know how. (CDA Instructor's Name) was my CDA teacher and she helped too. My teacher was great!

2.0-3: Yes, very. The instructor helped and the girls here that already had a CDA already too.

2.0-4: Yes, I had a really good teacher. This was really serious for me.

2.0-5: Once we got started it wasn't too overwhelming. But the first night of class I was like, whoa. But, the book, the CDA manual, it layed it all out.

2.0-6: Yeah, it would help if homework that we did for class could also be put together in our binder. For example the menu assignment and the binder one (menu) could all be put together. That way it could be done easier.

2.0-7: I did. They explained what we needed to do and it helped put our books together. It's not hard to do.

2.0-8: Yes, I had a clear understanding of where to go and what to do and where to get information. I felt confident in the process.

D.A.-1: Yes, (CDA Instructor) went over everything with us.

D.A.-2: I was really confused. I already had my associate's degree in early childhood but my old boss wanted me to get a CDA. I couldn't see why I needed it because it seemed like my classes could have counted towards it.

D.A.-3: Yes, especially back then. It's really different now. They helped us with our portfolios and stuff. I learned a lot during training.

Question 11: Did you receive your CDA Credential? What was your experience?

2.0-1: Yes! I got it in the mail yesterday!

2.0-2: Yes.

2.0-3: Yes, it came through very quick. Within the week it was back after the visit.

2.0-4: yes, it's on a plaque on my wall. I'm very proud of it!

2.0-5: Yes.

2.0-6: Yes.

2.0-7: Yes.

2.0-8: Yes.

D.A.-1: I received the credential.

D.A.-2: Yes.

D.A.-3: Yes.

Question 12: Would you recommend a CDA credential to other early childhood professionals?

Why or why not?

2.0-1: Most definitely. It's a good education about infants and toddlers and you get so much it helps you understand it easier.

2.0-2: Yes, my employees. It helps you in the classroom, the ways they think and all that good stuff.

2.0-3: Yes, because you think you know it all but going back to get a CDA you learn so much more. It makes you a better teacher and better understanding of why we do the things we do.

2.0-4: Yes, I would do it again. This was really serious to me. It was a busy time in my life but I wanted to go to school and I am going to continue. Those names on the wall in there, (points to office wall where staff are recognized) those are me. I call and get them (other early childhood teachers at the center) in, I register them and I help them.

2.0-5: Yes, it was informative for me. I take a lot of pride in mine and I wanted the education too.

2.0-6: Yeah, everything I learned. Best practices and child development too.

2.0-7: Yes, the training what it really does is refresh you on the trainings you have gone to and it was like, oh yeah! It was a good refresher. I came a long ways with my feelings and stuff. Like, how to control yourself as a teacher. It helps.

2.0-8: Yes, I do all the time. I recommend getting a CDA to teachers all the time. It really IS your best first step. It gives you more and more ideas of what you want to do and what you might do with your career. Getting a CDA helps point you towards college, even if you didn't know that was where you could go.

D.A.-1: Yes, I wish there were more grants and funding too. If they (other early childhood teachers) know better they do better.

D.A.-2: Yes, from looking for a job after we moved and after taking that class. When you look for a job, you need it. You get so much.

D.A.-3: Yes, I do all the time. You get so much from class and really grow as a teacher. You start to better understand your children and it makes you a better teacher.

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