The Director as a Key to Quality

Gwen G. Morgan

There are 120,000 children's centers in the United States, including nursery schools, preschools, child development centers, Head Start, and school-age programs, but not including small family child care homes. That is the number of directors (or managers, administrators, program directors, executives, or other titles) who are responsible for the quality stability and survival of center programs. Yet only a handful of colleges offer courses in early childhood administration, and only eight states even mention administrative training in their licensing requirements. In most states, the administrator is required to have knowledge about early childhood, but not about how to operate a children's program.

For parents in the United States, early care and education (ECE) programs are a necessity in our economy; it takes at least a job and a half to make it to the median income. The Family and Medical Leave Act established the right of parents to return to their jobs after a brief leave. In 1995, 55% of new mothers returned to the labor force within 12 months of giving birth; in 1976, the number was 31%. Working parents must rely on public policy to protect their right to choose a quality arrangement to supplement their own care.

Half the children enrolled in nursery schools have working mothers and half have nonworking parents. Nonworking parents, too, view supplemental care and education as a necessity.

Only 14% of centers in the United States are good to excellent (Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995). For a country with an economy so dependent on women's labor, and so concerned about the quality of education, 14% is not nearly good enough. The assumption that early childhood professional preparation as a teacher is the only training that administrators need is one of the reasons the quality of children's programs in the United States is largely poor to mediocre. Our field needs to face the reality of children in programs that are just not good enough.
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DIRECTOR

The role of the director, administrator, or executive in a center is a challenging one. The Appendix lists in full the different aspects of the role and the tasks associated with each. The eight areas of competencies are:

1. The ability to plan and implement a developmentally appropriate care and education program for children and families
2. The ability to develop and maintain an effective organization
3. The ability to plan and implement administrative systems that effectively carry out the program's mission, goals, and objectives
4. The ability to administer effectively a program of personnel management and staff development
5. The ability to foster good community relations and to influence the child care policy that affects the program
6. The ability to maintain and develop the physical facility
7. The legal knowledge necessary for effective management
8. The ability to apply financial management tools

A century ago, programs were small and the director was the key professional person, responsible for training all the other staff. As the field has evolved, emphasis is currently placed on professional preparation of the teacher/caregiver, and little attention is being paid to the qualifications of the person accountable for the entire program or organization.

Those of us who work closely with children's program organizations believe that the director is a key to quality. We know that even a highly trained staff is unlikely to provide quality if there is an unsupportive director.

A major child care policy study (Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995) found that the work experience of the director was a critical factor in quality. Directors with administrative experience were found in the small percentage of centers that were good or excellent. Initially a little surprising, the lack of a finding on the effects of administrative training in that study probably reflects the obvious fact that almost no academic preparation exists for ECE directors.

Why is the director so important? What does the director do that enables a center to achieve good quality? The most common assumption in the field is that the director is the supervisor of the staff. It is true that we will not achieve quality unless the director has in-depth knowledge in child development, programming, family relations, and family culture and needs; is caring; and can lead the staff. A director who has no special-
ized understanding of the work will undermine and throw up roadblocks to good teaching. Even if all states required high levels of preparation for teachers, quality would still be largely defeated if the administrators were not competent and supportive.

Before making policy about the preparation and qualifications of directors, it is important to examine what directors actually do that is important to quality. This list might give us an agenda for future research, and it certainly gives us a framework for preparation for the role.

**Program Planning and Program Leadership**

The director is a part of the child development field/profession, not an outside manager brought in with a different set of skills. While directors need other skills and knowledge that teachers and caregivers may not need, the director must have the technical knowledge of child development theory and practice. Almost all the direct work with children, and much of the relationship with parents, is the responsibility of the staff. The director may have more direct responsibility for working with parents than she or he has for working with children. High-quality ECE programs affect the parent-child dyad positively—not just the children, and not just the parents. Trying to achieve the mission and the vision of the program through others is a frustrating task, one that requires more than supervision. It requires inspiration and leadership.

**Supervision**

Good directors have found a number of different ways of supervising the performance of staff—from peer supervision systems, to customized training plans, to frequent informal feedback, problem-solving assistance, and coaching.

Most of the college preparation that a director may receive in supervision focuses on the supervision of the personal and professional growth of teachers/caregivers/group leaders. However, the director must also supervise the cook, the office staff, and the maintenance person, whose assumptions about growth might be different and who might require a different set of supervisory skills. Directors must be skilled in giving feedback and in holding all staff to high expectations.

Quality depends on the relationships staff have with children and their parents. The director must achieve quality through the work of others, an often frustrating task and one that demands skills and knowledge.
Other Human Relations Functions

Directors have other equally important tasks that relate to staff. Probably the most important one is recruiting and selecting the right individuals and then integrating them into the organization in a way that results in the staff person’s commitment to the organization’s goals and mission. No amount of supervision can compensate for a poor choice in hiring.

Quality for children and parents requires directors to be able to diversify their staff. A culturally diverse staff enriches all children and helps to prepare them for the diverse world. One-third of all White children, one-third of all Black children, 17% of Hispanic children, and 28% of all other children are enrolled in centers (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995).

It is important for children from different cultural and language-usage groups to see members of their own culture in positions of leadership and status. Otherwise the program sends a powerful and negative message to children about their own hopes for the future. Once a director has succeeded in diversifying the staffing, staff members will all need help in learning to work together productively.

Directors must also build a healthy organization, creating a strong supportive internal community that supports the staff in their work and in which parents feel comfortable and respected. Building the climate of support entails a great deal of effort in team building and organizational process. Many of these skills fall in the domain of organizational theory and leadership.

An agonizingly large percentage of the director’s time can be spent in resolving conflict with staff as well as conflict between staff and parents or between staff and staff. These issues are very difficult and painful, and they do not respond rapidly to rational problem solving. They involve emotions, values, and perspective, and they may take a long time to overcome. Meanwhile, they may seriously undermine quality. The director must balance the needs of children and families with the needs of the people in the organization.

The director’s decisions on personnel policies, benefits, and work processes are all directly related to the supportive climate of the organization. It is the director who is usually responsible for establishing the salary scale for staff, benefits, and working conditions. Few directors are able to muster enough resources to pay their staff as well as they would like, but they can set fair salary schedules for each role based on amount of specialized education as well as length of employment.
Internal Policy Making

Many or even most directors play a strong role in centers’ policy development. Center quality is closely related to its mission, its goals, its principles, and its philosophy. Sometimes the director is simply an agent carrying out policy established elsewhere. But since many children’s programs are small, free-standing organizations, the chances are great that most directors are not simply implementing policy but are also deeply involved in guiding policy development. In larger organizations, they may have a smaller role, but they will probably have a voice in policy making.

When the director is the entrepreneur, for-profit or not-for-profit, who started the program and is committed to its future, he or she is often the maker of policy. When there is a board of directors responsible for policy, it is the director who is the technically knowledgeable person who brings information to the board about the changing needs of the community, about the needs of children and families, and about policy that needs to be developed.

Whether largely alone or with others, the director is often responsible for the development and change of the mission, the goals, and the design of the program to meet needs of the community. The director represents the program in networking and collaborating with other community agencies. The director is the most important antenna for sensing changes in the environment and the need for new policy in response.

The pattern of director involvement in policy looks somewhat different when the program is part of a larger organization, such as a chain or a school system, college, or Head Start. But there are so many directors involved in policy development that it is important to view policy knowledge and skills as within the competencies that directors need to have in the interest of quality. Those who are part of larger organizations need a set of skills in order to influence policy in their situation. They also need the ability to move to a different type of organization.

Internal Policy Implementation

Directors do carry out policy, in addition to some degree of policy making. Directors are responsible and accountable for the implementation of policy. Their major role is making policy happen.

Knowledge and planning skills are not enough; policy must be implemented. It is the director who is accountable for maintaining the baseline of quality required for licensing or the higher level of quality promised by accreditation. A director may know what quality is, and be committed to quality, without achieving it day to day. The director may say to himself or herself, “This was a bad day because the toilets overflowed, that parent
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expressed such strong feelings, and the licensing office made an unan-
nounced visit.” Yesterday the director had three other reasons that quality
wasn’t achieved. Tomorrow there will be three others. The day-to-day cri-
esses of operation can derail the center from its quality objectives to such
an extent that there is almost never a day when the center operates as the
director intended.

Skills in creating operating systems are needed to assure that quality
is achieved, such as scheduling staff, monitoring attendance and enroll-
ment, communicating with everybody purchasing, and maintaining the
physical facility in good condition. The director makes decisions about
the number of staff to hire based on knowledge of the research that
makes ratio and group size key indicators of quality and based on his or
her own experience of quality for children. The director needs to know
what policies need to be hard-and-fast commitments and what policies
can have some leeway in implementation.

Financial Management

The director’s financial management role is essential to quality. Financial
management is different from accounting. It requires more than track-
ing where the money went; it requires forecasting, using money soundly
on the basis of priorities, making good predictions, and being alert to
changes on one side of the budget that require changes on the other side.
Often the director has skills in garnering new resources. ‘Certainly the
director must be able to allocate resources according to the program’s
priorities—the essence of quality.’

All the director’s dreams and aspirations for children and families
are found in the budget in the language of money. If the director lacks
skill in financial management, or if the director has delegated financial
management to another board or staff member, someone else is going to
be making all the decisions that determine policy and quality.

The full budget process is quite different from what the administra-
tor in Head Start or in public school-run programs encounters. In these
systems, the administrator may have few responsibilities for the income
side of the budget, being responsible only for spending within limits set
elsewhere. However, future reforms may focus on management at the
program level, creating a demand for administrators with financial skills.
If administrators are to move readily from one system to another, and if
they are to be prepared for future changes and reforms, basic financial
management skills such as budgeting, break-even analysis, cost analy-
sis, cash-flow projection, and budget projection are desirable. If the di-
rector is participating in both budget policy and program policy, and un-
derstands how closely they are married, quality is more likely.
Community Collaboration and Public Policy

The director also has external roles and relationships that are important to quality.

The community role is one aspect of this side of the director's work. Tasks include gathering resources, networking, interprofessional collaboration, and negotiating with funding sources and regulators. They require interpersonal skills, an "eagle-eye view" of the community configuration of services, and the ability to conceptualize and strategize for the future. Working together with other community agencies that serve families will enable each program to respond more fully to the needs of children and their families.

The public policy role is a second aspect of the director's work that is focused outside the organization. As directors seek quality for their centers, they find some aspects that are within their control at their centers and other aspects that are constraints or opportunities coming from public policy outside the center. A good example is the critical issue of salaries of ECE staff. Within the resources of the center, the director may be limited to assuring that a salary scale is fair and offers incentives and rewards to those who increase their learning. But the administrator is also a community leader influencing public policy who will be alert to opportunities for bringing more public resources to bear on the issue of paying the cost of quality including compensation. To be effective in public policy, the director must be knowledgeable about both the policy process per se and the background and policy history of each important issue in the field.

The description above of the director's various roles and tasks is intended to summarize the reasons that the director is the key to quality. We know that we need quality for positive effects on children and that low quality will have negative, harmful effects. All positive effects of child care and education correlate with the quality of the program; harmful effects correlate with poor quality. The next question is how best to assure that there are regulatory, funding, and educational policies in place that assure that directors have the knowledge and skill they need.

A CREDENTIAL FOR DIRECTORS

The term director credentialing is used here to refer to the awarding of a certificate, permit, or other document. The document certifies that an individual has mastered a specific set of defined skills and knowledge,
and has demonstrated competencies to prepare for performance as a di-
rector in any ECE or school-age setting (e.g., Head Start, private nonprofit
programs, for-profit programs, public and private schools). A credential
may be awarded by a professional association, state agency, higher educa-
tion consortium, or other organization with a legitimate interest in the
qualifications of directors.

The process of credentialing begins in most places as an optional
process. Directors are invited to seek the credential on a purely voluntary
basis, and there may be help for them in paying for it. Since it is in early
stages, it could evolve in a number of different directions. If required in
licensing some day it would become the necessary level of quality to
prevent harm to children. If voluntary but required for funding or accred-
itation, it could be part of a higher level of quality or a part of a continu-
ous pursuit of excellence.

**LEVELS OF QUALITY**

In order to think about how a credential can have maximum effect on
quality in a particular state or locality, it is important to conceptualize
different levels of quality. Different strategies are needed to address dif-
ferent levels of quality. Norris Class (1969) presented a conceptual frame-
work for levels of standards for ECE at a National Association for the
Education of Young Children (NAEYC) meeting in Seattle many years ago.
Since then, the framework has been reworked and summarized a number
of times in print. Conceptually it is useful to define four levels of quality:

1. Harmful, which is unacceptable
2. Good enough so that the program can be permitted to exist
3. Good quality
4. Pursuit of excellence

These different levels of quality are implemented in public policy by dif-
ferent strategies that can use levels of standards. The three most impor-
tant are licensing standards, funding standards, and accreditation stan-
dards (Morgan, 1996).

**Good Enough to Do No Harm**

The most basic level of quality in licensing is good enough to do no harm.
Licensing is a powerful state intervention into the right of citizens to earn
a living caring for children, on behalf of children's right not to be harmed
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and parents' right to safe choices. Licensing laws have been in place in the states for many years, the first passed in Pennsylvania in the 1880s. The law usually begins by completely outlawing the service, because the legislative body has determined there is a risk of harm. Permission is then restored to certain individuals who have met standards and received an official license, or permit, from the state. The accountable individual responsible for meeting these basic standards is the director. In this way licensing affects all legally operating programs.

Strategies at the level of potential harm must address reducing the risk of harm—harm from developmental impairment just as much as the harm that comes from fire, unsafe buildings, disease, poisoning, or injury.

A first principle has to be “First, do no harm.” There are many research findings that harm is more likely to come to children in programs with higher ratios of children cared for by untrained teachers, and under various other conditions that licensing rules seek to eliminate. It is the director who is responsible and accountable for maintaining the level of quality that reduces the risk of harm.

Penalties, and in some situations help, is ordered for programs that operate at a harmful level, to try to bring them to a level where harm will not be likely. Other incentives are needed to move programs from this “good enough to do no harm” level to higher levels of quality since the state cannot require programs to achieve their ideals.

Misperceptions of Licensing. In general, advocates in the ECE field do not define levels of quality. We want only the best for America's children. We have given policy makers the impression that we are in favor of unnecessary expense to benefit ourselves and our field. To quote an influential author in the present climate (Howard, 1994), “What they dream up, and then turn into law, is their view of the ideal facility. It is as if the illustrator Norman Rockwell had been made dictator and ordered everyone to do things his way” (p. 39).

Howard continues, “Less idealized rules would permit affordable day care for parents who can't possibly pay $4,000 for each child, while still providing a basic oversight function. This would require, however, accepting the idea that everything can't be perfect” (p. 41).

Currently, no state is requiring “ideal” quality, or “Cadillac child care” in its licensing, despite perceptions like these. The fact that there is a massive misperception of licensing may tell us that we as advocates have given the impression that we want licensing to mandate the ideal. In our pursuit of quality we may have reinforced the views of the antiregulators.

Licensing must be feasible in the evolving field of practice. Licensing
can eliminate intentionally harmful programs, reduce risks, educate new providers, and maintain a level of “good enough” care. But it cannot go beyond “good enough” until the citizens of a state raise the bar and redefine what is “good enough.” However, the fact that 86% of all centers are mediocre to poor is an indication that some states, at least, have not set a reasonable level of “good enough” quality to prevent harmful care.

The level of “good enough” is agreed on when there are programs in a state able and willing to meet the rules. If a state sets its rules higher than the field of practice can meet—an unlikely possibility—it will not be able to enforce the rule, and widespread waivers will result.

However, the field of practice is continually learning and improving beyond what is required. Accreditation, training programs, professional meetings, publications, talented administrators, and expert advice affect the level of quality in a state. At fairly frequent intervals when the state is rewriting its rules, there will be more practitioners able to reach a higher level of quality and a redefinition of “good enough” based on new knowledge of how to prevent harm to children.

Licensing therefore tends to continue to raise its level of required “good enough” quality over time, as more and more practitioners improve their programs and are able to meet new rules. A strategy that has been successfully used in many states in recent years (Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas) has been to adopt new rules and to postpone the effective date for implementing them. In that way opposition to change can be defused by giving operators time to make the transition.

**Administrative Requirements for Director Qualifications.** As noted in Chapter 1, at the licensed level, there are currently very few states that even mention administrative training as necessary for directors, although they may require child development training.

**Good Quality**

Even though licensing alone cannot get us to good quality, there are other policy tools that states can use as incentives for higher quality. The next level up of standards would be funding standards. A funding source might specify that programs receiving its dollars should not only meet basic licensing requirements but also reach a higher level of quality. Funding standards apply to subsidized programs rather than to all programs. Programs not receiving these funds are not obligated to meet these standards, but the funding source can specify a level of quality it wishes to attain to achieve its goals. Head Start’s performance standards are one example of funding standards.
Accreditation standards represent a level of quality that is voluntarily sought by programs that wish to be recognized for their higher quality. Accreditation is one of our best tools for stimulating programs to be “good” or to pursue excellence. The bottom line for accreditation cannot be “good enough”; it has to be “good.” There are now accreditation systems for centers, family child care homes, and school-age programs from national organizations representing each of those types of programs. Programs with the will toward higher quality voluntarily apply for accreditation, which recognizes their will and their accomplishments, regardless of state subsidy policy. Accreditation in the long run affects all market care.

Pursuit of Excellence

Excellence is a pursuit that never ends, as most directors know. We should not be satisfied with “good” programs, even those that meet every accreditation standard. It is important to take a look at our excellent programs, and at excellence in other fields, to see what we can do to inspire and challenge the ECE field to pursue excellence.

Centers for young children often have a high degree of program autonomy with a minimum of the red tape and bureaucracy that impedes school-based management as a school reform. Each small licensed program can be establishing its own unique place in the community and pursuing its own unique vision.

Knowing this, we might think of ways of writing accreditation standards that will expect continuous improvement and inspire excellence. We might consider whether we could ask programs to identify further improvement beyond accreditation standards that they intend to make, and then ask for a progress report at the time for reaccreditation.

DIRECTOR-BASED STRATEGIES TOWARD IMPROVING ALL LEVELS OF QUALITY

Promising avenues for improvement of ECE programs must include much more attention to an administrator’s professional training, in both licensing requirements and accreditation standards. Much of our emphasis has been limited to assuring that directors or other administrators are qualified in child development. However, they need to understand how to manage, how to maintain policy in their operations, how to give feedback to their staff, and how to create a healthy organization—the competencies summarized in the Appendix. A complex set of competencies enables administrators to design their programs to meet the changing needs of the families and children who use them. A credential can support admin-
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Administrators and staff in working toward higher levels of quality. The following strategies can be adopted to move toward director credentialing.

**Institute Licensing Requirements for Training in Administration**

A credential for directors, to the extent that it is necessary to prevent harm, must become a part of the licensing strategy—or at the very least some administrative content should be part of the required training. Since directors are so important to quality states should increase the amount of administrative training required over and above child development training, and eventually should require a credential.

If a program cannot or will not consistently meet the basic requirements a state has determined to be necessary, it may be that the director lacks necessary competence. A state could require additional training or a change in management as a further enforcement tool.

Some of the content of director credentialing training will be directly useful in further improvement of family child care, since the provider’s role, too, requires both a knowledge of administration and a knowledge of service to children and their families. The administrative content should be accessible to providers as part of required training.

**Require Administrative Training for Recognition at Higher Levels of Quality**

A director credential that is above the basic level of licensing could be required as an accreditation standard. Initially it could be a funding requirement for directors of centers above a certain size, where a case can be made that the requirement would protect the investment of public dollars in the program.

Since director competence predicts success in achieving accreditation, it is justifiable to strengthen the qualifications of directors in the accreditation standards.

The credential required for licensing might not be as extensive as what the state will establish for its voluntary credential. For example, Wisconsin is developing a credential based on six courses. The first course is required for licensing. The other courses are initially voluntary although the entire credential might be required by a private funding source or a board of directors seeking to employ a competent director.

**Pay More for Higher-Quality Programs**

Funding strategies can and should be tied to level of quality, and a qualified director should be included in the definition of rate structure. Start-
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-ing at the lowest level, we certainly should not fund the programs that are low in compliance with licensing. Texas now has a system of numerically rating centers on their level of compliance, from 1 to 3. Centers with high compliance are visited less often by licensers. Those with lower compliance are visited more often. The state will not fund centers that are rated in the bottom tier.

Some states have defined a level between licensing and accreditation. A very interesting trend in the states has been a recent policy of paying a higher subsidy rate for higher-quality care. Some states have established three levels, the "good enough" level of licensing; a middle "good" level; and the high quality represented by accreditation. At least 17 states have adopted the policy of paying at least two levels of subsidy (Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Vermont, and Wisconsin), and of these, at least four have three tiers-low, medium, and high (Blank & Adams, 1997).

It is the middle tier where states are most likely to become creative, specifying in their reimbursement policy more stringent regulations for staffing than they can impose in licensing. Key standards at this level might include more qualified teachers, better ratios and group size, fair salary schedules, and diverse staffing. A credentialed director at this level could be expected to have a greater amount of training than the state would require of all directors through licensing. This credentialed director would be the accountable person for achieving the higher level of quality

Improve Access to Training

The incentives to further training through scholarship programs such as the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.®) Early Childhood Program in North Carolina can inspire the field of practice to move to another level. Teacher Education and Compensation Helps can be tailored to many different purposes, including a scholarship program for directors to help them finance a credential.

It may well be that at some future time we will develop some kind of awards for excellence that will go beyond accreditation to recognize the uniqueness of each vision of quality. Before that can happen, we will need a national supply of highly skilled and knowledgeable administrators, pursuing excellence and refining their visions. Strategies for excellence will be dependent on the excellence of the administrator's leadership.
APPENDIX: COMPETENCIES OF EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS

This list of director competencies was adapted from a list I prepared based on work by Joe Perrault and Nancy Travis at Save the Children, refined through class discussion and assignments by administrators from across the country who participate in administrators’ courses at Wheelock College. The following competencies should be possessed by administrators:

1. The ability to plan and implement a developmentally appropriate care and education program for children and families.

A competent director has:

- The ability to hire competent staff to work with children and contribute to their further development in a staff development plan that includes frequent feedback sessions between director and children.
- Knowledge of current research findings in child and human development theory and their applicability to children’s programs. This includes knowledge of brain development.
- Knowledge of caring concepts, including their history and applicable theory in relation to other child development findings.
- Familiarity with best practices in programming for children.
- Focus on the child in the family,
- Understanding of the potential of observation as a tool in programming, and support for observation and documentation as an important staff function.
- Ability to inspire and stimulate staff to continuous improvement of the program with attention to:
  - Pacing for a long day
  - Transitions
  - Family culture and values
  - Family-friendly service
  - Presentation skills and communicating to parents
  - Display of child work to give meaning to the activities of the program
  - Anti-bias curriculum
  - Developmentally appropriate practice for all children

For work with families, directors need competence in all the above, plus:

- Helping relationships.
- Family development, parent development, education, leadership development, and interprofessional perspectives.
- Skills in feedback and communication.
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1. Empathy with parent perspectives.
   - Skills to support family culture and language; ability to negotiate across differences.
   - Respect for centrality of the parent role in a child’s life.
   - Ability to see the child care program as a support for parent’s lives (family centric) rather than exclusively focusing on the parent as part of a supportive environment for the early care and education program (center centric).

2. The ability to develop and maintain an effective organization.
   A competent director must
   - Understand the legal form of the organization, its philosophical base, its history and its goals.
   - Be able to sense and respond to environmental influences and to stakeholders, both external and internal.
   - Understand and comply with all applicable rules and regulations.
   - Develop a management philosophy that includes a clear mission statement and clear objectives based on the organization’s values and the needs expressed by parents in the community.
   - Develop and implement strategies for management that build teamwork and participation of staff; make effective use of time and other resources; engage in short-term problem solving and long-term planning.
   - Work with and contribute to board development in organizations that have boards; develop advisory groups where applicable.
   - Be able to evaluate the program and all its components, and use this evaluation to change and improve the program.
   - Know basic strategic planning processes.

3. The ability to plan and implement administrative systems that effectively carry out the program’s mission, goals, and objectives.
   A competent director is ultimately responsible for
   - Systems for implementing curriculum, addressing all aspects of development for each child appropriate to their individual age, culture, and level of development.
   - Regular communication with parents that respects their values and culture; involves them appropriately in the life of the program; supports their lives, including their home language; and focuses on contributing to the parent-child dyad and improving the quality of life for families.
   - Nutrition and food service management.
   - Recruitment and enrollment of children, as well as attention to separation issues for children and parents.
   - Social services and health care, appropriate to the needs of the parent group.
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4. The ability to administer effectively a program of personnel management and staff development.

In the organization as a whole, a competent director must effectively:
- Give and receive feedback.
- Gather needed information through regular communication with all staff and parents.
- Facilitate the development of community among staff, among parents, among the board or advisory groups, and among children.
- Maintain personal stability and confidence, self-awareness, desire for growth, and the ability to change.
- Set the stage for recruiting, accepting, and retaining a diverse group of staff members.

For staff development and support, a competent director must:
- Observe objectively and give positive and negative feedback in a way that helps individuals to change.
- Motivate and challenge people and set a high standard.
- Communicate clear expectations for performance and ensure that goals and objectives are met.
- Possess effective training skills and knowledge of training methods.
- Have the skills needed, including interviewing skills, to hire the right person.
- Supervise performance over time, with follow through, so that poor performance leads to termination and good performance is recognized.
- Have knowledge of different supervisory styles and methods that can meet individual needs of supervisees and be appropriate to classroom staff as well as the cook, maintenance staff, office staff, and other nonclassroom personnel.
- Model appropriate behavior.
- Understand different cultural styles of interacting, leading, and participating.

5. The ability to foster good community relations and to influence child care policy that affects the program.

A competent director must:
- Have knowledge of community services and functions, including knowledge of:
- Child care resource and referral organizations and what they offer parents and providers
  - Ending fees, charged and service options, and how to network to form professional collaborative relationships with other program administrators
  - Health services, social services, and other vendors and providers of functions needed by the program and the parents using them
  - Community-based organizations such as religious institutions that have influence on families’ lives
  - Child care policies and changes that are made in them, including regulatory policies, funding policies, and governmental structure
  - Legislative processes and how to participate in them
  - Media and other ways to develop public support

  Use this knowledge to build networks and coalitions as needed.

  Have effective skills in communication, including:
  - Public speaking
  - Writing letters
  - Writing proposals, marketing plans, and business plans
  - Communicating in languages other than English
  - Giving media interviews and maintaining media contacts
  - Supervising or producing brochures, flyers, parent handbooks, and other materials
  - Maintaining regular communication with other advocates
  - Maintaining a commitment to educate the community on issues affecting young children and their programs on a regular basis

6. The ability to maintain and develop the physical facility.
   A competent director must have the knowledge and skills to
   - Establish procedures to monitor and correct in order to maintain compliance with all applicable codes—fire, safety, health, sanitation, building, and zoning.
   - Maintain all equipment to ensure safe working condition and have knowledge of procedures for maintenance and repair.
   - Establish and maintain safe security practices and equipment at all times.
   - Ensure appropriate room arrangement/space design and support the design and redesign of effective space, based on knowledge of environmental psychology and early childhood education.

7. The legal knowledge necessary for effective management.
   The competent director must be able to work with legal counsel and will have general personal knowledge in the following areas
   - Applicable regulatory standards and concepts, including the rights of licensees
The Director as Key to Quality

. Custody issues that affect child care
. Confidentiality and child welfare laws that affect child care
. Labor laws that affect child care
. Antidiscrimination laws that affect child care and employee rights
. Working knowledge of liability issues
. Health rules
. Basics of contracts that affect the center

8. The ability to apply financial management tools.

The competent director will assume responsibility for financial management and will have the ability to direct the accountant or other financial staff on how to present figures on income, expenditures, enrollment, and other information in ways that inform decision making. This includes the ability and knowledge needed to:

. Mobilize needed resources, including the use of fund-raising, marketing, unrelated business income, and governmental grants or third-party purchase-of-service agreements.
. Maintain accurate and complete financial expenditure records.
. Use financial tools in planning:
  - Effective budget planning and monitoring
    - Establishing a staffing pattern for each room
    - Setting an annual budget and projections
    - Conducting deviation analysis
    - Conducting functional cost analysis
  - Cash-flow projection
  - Break-even analysis
. Identify federal, state, and local funding sources, both public and private.
. Understand basic marketing concepts.
. Develop and implement fee policies that fit the needs of the organization.
. Develop a compensation structure that rewards retention and increased knowledge and skills of staff.

Note: The above competencies are needed by directors of centers who serve as executives, fully responsible for program operation. If the income side of the budget is someone else's responsibility, as is usually the case in public school-based programs or Head Start, the director may not need the full range of competencies. Directors of small programs and group child care home Licensees need the competencies at a more generalist level than directors of large programs.
REFERENCES


