

February Newsletter

This month's article comes from reader request (which I love to receive by the way!), she wanted to know how to train her staff so she could trust them to do things as she would in her absence. For those of you who ARE staff - perhaps it will give you ideas on better ways to work with your boss. Feel free to give them a copy of the article! Let them know you want to be part of the team, but clear communication is necessary so you know what they want from you. Best of luck to both sides of this fence!

*Hug a kid for me!
Patricia*

PS: As you can see, I tried using a new format, let me know if it's working for you!

Inspiring Staff

When we consider what we hope for from our employees, what we often envision is someone much like ourselves! Yet every employee will be different, not only from us, but from each other as well. So how do we, as employers in the field of early childhood/child care, ensure some continuity in the work of our employees?

To answer this question, first consider what it is that is important to you. List your priorities. Go deeper than the basics of "quality" or "safety". Be specific: "To inspire a child's creativity" or "To model positive social skills." Find your top 10. Think of every aspect of being a teacher: "Keep counters clear of clutter" or "Speak respectfully to other teachers and parents."

Chances are that the things that your staff does that really bother you the most are actions that go against these priorities. By identifying them you'll be better prepared to guide your staff towards achieving your goals and behaving in a way that you see as positive. As I said, every person is different. Your staff, if questioned, would probably list 10 different priorities. So, the more staff you have, the more variety in priorities - and the less cohesive your team will be.

To get everyone to align their priorities a little closer, you have two tasks. First, identify the various priorities of your staff. Consider modifying your list to include their top priorities as well. Second, of those priorities that are on your list, but not theirs, help them to see the value in them, and get them emotionally invested. What I mean by this is, talk with staff about why these things are important to you. Avoid simple directives for staff to adopt your priorities, instead help them to see the value in each through your eyes. You'll be more successful gaining their respect for these activities if they have a deeper understanding.

For example, for myself, supporting a child's creative nature was a priority. Much more so than maintaining a neat and orderly room. So I would talk with staff about how exciting it is for me to see a child build a fort and for them to use items from around the room in creative ways such as an overturned table with yarn tied from leg to leg and scarves attached to the yarn with clothespins. I would explain that this is important because my goal is for children to learn to problem solve and become future inventors of the world.

Next, help them become emotionally invested. People work hard when they care deeply about the work they do. Help staff to become aware of the outcome of keeping these priorities. When they see there is a personal reward, they will be more vested in the process. To do this, give some specific examples of the possible outcomes and how it can relate to that staff person. For example, I could name the children and point out their creative abilities and how that could translate to their future. "Annie might be the next Picasso, she finger-painted on the cupboards today! John stacked all the storybooks on top of two chairs and a doll house, he'll make a great engineer! And Tommy used all the crepe paper to wrap up Annie's arm when she bumped her elbow - wouldn't you feel lucky to have him for your doctor some day?" I might even share stories of past graduates of my program that have come back as adults to share with me their life accomplishments.

Any priority that directly affects the children's learning and play can be handled as I've illustrated. But what about those priorities that affect other areas of your business? Such as paperwork, cleanliness, staff interactions? You follow the same formula: explain why it's important to you and give an example of a positive outcome that affects the staff. That positive outcome could be the respect of peers, or parents. Or, it could be an incentive you offer. Such as a dinner out each month for the employee who had the cleanest countertops and art shelves. It could be a free resource book to the employee that handed in the most lesson plans on time or stayed the farthest under budget when requesting materials for the month. When there isn't a direct personal incentive you can find (such as a child outcome or parent appreciation) then create one through incentives such as small gifts, a short break with a hot cup of coffee, a new book to read, etc. Figure out what motivates your staff and connect it to the priorities you want kept.

What can seem obvious to us, is not always obvious to others. We need to respect that our staff may have different views about what is important and what is not. To get everyone working as a team, and moving towards your goals, we can incorporate what is important to our staff either by adopting some of their priorities, or by building incentive to make it important. Remember that staff members who have worked elsewhere before coming to you were probably coached on different priorities - those of their previous boss! It's just a matter of open communication, clearly identifying priorities for this specific workplace, and getting your staff inspired to uphold those priorities. When handled in this manner, you'll have a staff you can be proud of, that enjoys working for you, and that works as a team to meet all your goals.

Build your staff's sense of professionalism with a KIDBIZ Training: Professionalism for Staff. On sale in March at: www.KIDBIZResources.com.

Tips & Tricks

Connect the children in your care to their community by using field trips to expand on their learning:

- Show children all the things you can do with a rock! Visit a local granite countertop store to see the variations in this particular rock formation. Ask for samples or broken pieces (2 of each) to create a matching game with. Discover together why each "rock" is a different color.
- Show children how water gets from the ground to their faucets by visiting a local plumbing shop. Take home PVC pipes to stick together and create your own way to move a water source, example: from the yard hose to a sandbox.
- Show children the many things a flower can say - visit a local florist and ask them share the meaning of different flowers, where they get the flowers from, and talk about their many sizes, shapes and colors.

In The News

Preventing Childhood Obesity

Do you want fun ways to promote physical activity, and healthy eating? Come learn why fitness is important for children, explore lifelong benefits of active play, exchange indoor and outdoor fitness activities, and discover how to promote healthy eating and integrate nutrition education into early childhood curriculum. Learn about available outcome-based resources, including those for Spanish-speaking families. Dr. Charlotte Hendricks and other nationally known speakers will present a full-day workshop at the NHSA Annual Conference, April 5, in Kansas City, MO. To register, visit www.nhsa.org.

Great Video Resources

Check out the video resources available at: www.292baby.org/video_on_demand.htm. The Childhood Obesity videos were created with the help of Diana Webb, NAFCC Treasurer!

Celebrating Failures

My new blog is finally up and I'm getting the hang of it - follow along as I journey through new experiences, failures and successes, and try to find the lesson in each. <http://celebratefailures.blogspot.com/> The blog is dedicated to my Dad, who's philosophy was: "A mistake is only a mistake until you've learned from it, then it's a lesson."

NAFCC 2011 Conference

Quest for Quality: Supporting Happy, Healthy Children

Come join me and all the nation's top experts in our field for high quality trainings, networking, and the opportunity to rejuvenate you and your career! We'll be at the beautiful Green Valley Ranch Resort Las Vegas in Henderson, Nevada, July 21-23, 2011. Easy layaway plan available, check it out at: www.nafcc.org and I'll see you there!

This Month's Sale Item

February Sale Item: No Regrets Pregnancy Counseling Booklet - 15% Off!

These cost-efficient booklets are perfect for pregnancy counseling centers, allowing them to put the first three chapters of "Because I Loved You" into the hands of those who need it most. Written to directly speak to those considering their options in an unplanned pregnancy the booklet helps walk the reader through the decision making process to get them to a decision that will be right for them and that they can follow through on with no regrets.

Regular Price: \$40 for a set of 10 Sale Price: \$34

March Sale Item: KIDBIZ Trainers Guide: Professionalism for Staff - \$20 Off!

Great training materials for you to use in strengthening your staff's professionalism and commitment to children and their careers! Includes a copy of "From Babysitter to Business Owner", a Power Point presentation, a complete lecture, and handouts for your staff.

Regular Price: \$75 Sale Price: \$55

Order yours today at: www.patriciadischler.com or www.KIDBIZResources.com!

Speaking Events

March 5, 2011

Chicago Area Families For Adoption (CAFFA) Conference

Lessons Learned from Open Adoption

Wheaton, Illinois

For more information visit: www.caffa.org

March 12, 2011

OURS Through Adoption Conference

Keynote: *Trusting a Stranger for the Sake of a Child*

Workshops: *Lessons Learned from Open Adoption*

Because I Loved You: Understanding a Birthmother's Perspective

Positive Interactions in Adoption

March 26, 2011

CCR&R Full Day Training: *From Babysitter to Business Owner*

Carterville, Illinois

For more information call: [618-985-5986](tel:618-985-5986)

If you are a member of a group planning a training event and would like to book one of my keynotes or workshops, visit the Lecture page on my website and contact me for availability. Visit www.patriciadischler.com/lecture.php.