

Early Childhood Exchange



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Welcome to another issue of the **Early Childhood Exchange!** This has been an exciting, fun experience for me. As Guest Editor of the Exchange, I not only had the pleasure of working with Dave Riley, but of participating in some new experiences and meeting some great people.

The articles in this issue focus on family day care. We will tell you about a special training event for family day care providers and a problem solving process that can be used by anyone in the early childhood community. Since many of the readers of this newsletter are parents and family day care providers, we hope this information is particularly helpful for you.

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A Parade of Family Day Care Homes

Mary, a family day care provider who has been in the business for 5 years, has often wondered how other family day care providers manage to efficiently organize both their time and space. She has lived in two different homes and with each has had limited space for both family things and her business. But thanks to the **Parade of Family Day Care Homes** sponsored by the Dane County **Family Day Care Caucus (FDCC)**, Mary soon discovered that not only did other people share the same concerns but that some had come up with creative solutions to time and space problems, and had found ways to integrate the day care business into the family home.

On Saturday, October 18, 1986 the Dane County FDCC sponsored its second annual parade of family day care homes in Madison, Wisconsin. Designed as a training event for family day care providers, the parade does not claim to present the perfect family day care situation. But it is an exciting and interesting way for family day care providers and other interested individuals to find out what's happening within one aspect of the day care community and to exchange ideas. The parade is a particularly interesting event since family day care providers are, unfortunately, often a less visible component of the early childhood and day care community. Further, the parade offers a unique opportunity for providers to visit other family day care homes. This article briefly describes the event and provides some comments from participants. If you are interested in planning a similar event in your community, then contact your county Extension Home Economist or the Family Day Care Caucus (address on page 4). *(Also see the interview with Sharon Kennedy on the background of the family day care parade of homes.)*

Getting Started

The event is scheduled for a Saturday morning in October. While participants can register in advance, many register on the morning of the event at the community center where it begins. A fee of \$4.00 is charged, and individuals are provided with a packet of materials including information on each of the homes to be visited, maps and other resource material. Participants chat over coffee and muffins as they await the arrival of others.

Participants divide themselves into small groups. Each group coordinates transportation and then takes off for a different destination. The morning schedule is organized into travel time and visit time such that groups do not overlap, and every group gets to see every home.

What do the providers talk about?

Everything from the bathroom to the kitchen sink. The provider presents an overview of her program, the ages and number of children she cares for, and what's special about her program. She describes how she has overcome some space limitations, worked out a schedule that accommodates mixed-age children, made home made materials, and mentions other resources for materials. The provider explains how the house is organized and how family things are separated or integrated with the day care business. A tour of the home shows where children play with small manipulatives, have group time, engage in messy activities, nap, or practice gross motor skills.



An exchange of ideas

This year some of the ideas that got participants excited ranged from the simple idea of using soap dish suction cup holders to hold toddler plates to the table or high chair, to complex issues on how the family day care business affects taxes, especially when one remodels specifically to better the day care business. One provider described how, when she remodelled a back room, she brought up a floor heater vent near the backyard door, put wall hooks over it, and thus created a place to quickly dry children's wet mittens, scarves and other outdoor clothing. Another provider described her assertive negotiations with reluctant contractors to get the space and design she wanted when she added on to her home specifically to house the day care program.

An exciting aspect of the parade is that while providers spend a great deal of time discussing their program and innovative and creative approaches to day care problems, the participants often share many of their ideas as well. Some of these ideas included how to make heavy duty building blocks from milk cartons, and how to hide the family's stereo equipment from curious toddler fingers. The mutual exchange of information makes this a great learning experience for both providers and participants.

A public relations event

By listening in on the exchanges during the tour, one quickly learns that these individuals are professionals who work hard to provide the best possible care for children. They are innovative, creative and resourceful. One comes away with the feeling that these particular family day care providers put as much planning, energy, and careful consideration into their programs as do center-based or school programs. The parade of family day care homes proved to be not only a great learning experience, but a great public relations event as well.



WHAT ARE THE REACTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS?

Q: What do you hope to get out of this?

A: "I've never been on one of these before, so I wanted to find out what it's like."

"I've been in the family day care business for 20 years, so I'm not sure what I'll get out of it. I thought I should find out what others are doing."

"I hope to come away with some new ideas."

"I was on the tour last year. And when you get done you say 'I want this and I want that.' But then you realize that you have things that they don't, and that makes you feel good."

"The outdoor space. That's what I want to see. I'm an outdoors person. I want the kids in my care to be able to go outside and run and play. So I like to see other people's yards or parks where the kids can play."

Q: What are your reactions to what you've seen today?

A: "You know, these people [the providers] put in a full week's work. And then they open up their homes on a Saturday morning for a bunch of people to walk through. That's pretty great. I really like the parade. I never get to come to their places otherwise. I come away with so many new ideas that I can go back to my place and try out."

"It's great to see how others have arranged their space or made materials and so on. But I think it's important just to meet the other providers. I don't care how great the place is. What really makes the difference is the person providing the care."

"You know, I've been in the business for a long time, and yet I didn't think that I had anything special. But after visiting these homes, I like what I'm doing, and I feel my home and program are as good as any I've seen today."

INTERVIEW WITH SHARON KENNEDY OF THE DANE COUNTY FAMILY DAY CARE CAUCUS (FDCC).

Because the **Parade of Family Daycare Homes** is a rather unique event, and because many communities may not be familiar with organizations like the **Family Day Care Caucus (FDCC)**, we asked Sharon Kennedy, a member of the FDCC, and a child care professional in Madison, to provide some background on both the organization and the Parade.

ECX: *Tell me about the 4-C FDCC. What is it? What does it do?*

A: The FDCC was established by 4-C (Community Coordinated Child Care) in Dane County. Members include technical assistance people, providers, and parents using family day care. It serves an advocacy function for family day care in general. Members of the Caucus attend city council and county board meetings in order to keep an eye on and advocate for increased dollars for low-income families needing day care. We also provide training and act as a resource for family day care providers.

ECX: *You have sponsored a Parade of Family Day Care Homes. How did the event get started?*

A: The FDCC provides a fall and spring training event each year for family day care providers. We wanted to develop an alternative to the typical workshop type of training. So, like the Parade of Homes, we thought of a parade of family day care homes as a way to introduce people to new ideas in a hands-on way.

ECX: *What do you hope participants get out of it?*

A: We hope that established providers can come away with new ideas for reorganizing their space and those just beginning in the business can see how they might go about setting up their own homes for day care. It also helps those who open their homes feel more professional since they have an established program and can consider themselves trainers.

ECX: *How are the homes selected?*

A: In the two years that we have been doing this, the homes have been selected basically by word-of-mouth. We hear that an individual has done something special, such as adding on, remodeling, etc., to accommodate their family day care business. We contact them to see if they would be willing to

show their home and explain their program to the participants. We also try to get a variety of settings. For example, this year we had a home where an addition was made specifically to house the family day care, a home where the day care was separated in the lower level, a home being remodeled to accommodate the family day care, and a small rental property. Last year we were also able to include an apartment as one of the day care facilities. We also consider geographic location and aim for variety in type of care provided; that is, infant care, or older children, state licensed vs. city certified, and so on. One of our goals for this year is to come up with a list of criteria by which we can select homes in a more democratic process.

ECX: *How do you let people know about the Parade?*

A: We send the information out in the 4-C **Focus** newsletter and through a special mailing to the over 450 regulated family day care providers in the county on our referral list. We also contact the newspapers, radio stations, and TV stations.

ECX: *What has the response been?*

A: Very good. Last year we had 53 participants and this year about 33. That is about the right number of persons able to see each home without being too crowded. Last year the newspaper ran a substantial article on the Parade and that might have been the reason for the slightly larger turnout. The comments from the participants are very positive. They are very excited and amazed at the different ideas. For some it reaffirms their sense of professionalism and knowledge that they are doing a good job. We are very pleased with this as a training experience for family day care providers. We will be publishing a manual on how to set up such a Parade of Family Day Care Homes training event. There has been a lot of interest in this from around the nation and this "how to" manual should be helpful.

If you would like more information on the **Parade of Family Day Care Homes** and would like to set up such an event in your own community, contact your county Extension Home Economist and:

4-C FAMILY DAY CARE CAUCUS
3200 Monroe Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53711
(608) 238-7338

PARENT-PROVIDER NEGOTIATIONS

Do you sometimes feel that people take advantage of you? Do you feel misunderstood, or that your concerns fall on unsympathetic ears?

Recently 80 family day care providers participated in a workshop designed to help them identify and then resolve the situations that make them feel frustrated, angry or misunderstood. The problems they identified included:

1. Parents who bring sick children to day care
2. Parents who are late to pick up children
3. Lack of communication between parent and provider
4. When parents do not follow agreed upon contracts
5. Having to justify fee increases.

Although some of the problems identified by the providers are unique to family day care, the process of finding solutions to these and other problems can be used by anyone.

Effective communication

Frequently, the key to effective problem resolution lies in effective communication skills. In a profession such as child care or early childhood education which is based on ongoing interactions between providers or teachers, and parents and children, effective communication is of the utmost importance.

According to Cathryn Hatle, a family day care provider who has led this workshop for a variety of groups, good communication consists of two simple-to-say and often difficult-to-do parts: really listening to what the other person is saying and really saying what we mean. The problem-solving process that Ms. Hatle led participants through is based on assertiveness, which is nothing more or less than saying what you mean, but in a non-accusatory, non-aggressive way.

Using the example of parents who often pick up their children late, a frustrated, angry provider might say:

"Why are you so inconsiderate! Don't you know that I have a family too! You come waltzing in whenever you feel like it and you don't care at all that your kid is waiting or that I have things to do!"



Or the provider could send an "I-message":

"I feel angry and impatient when Judd is picked up late because I have difficulty starting dinner and caring for him at the same time."

The former aggressive statement immediately places the parent on the defensive and encourages an aggressive reply. Both parent and provider are placed in an adversarial relationship. On the other hand, the I-message provides the same information but encourages more open communication.

Another example of an I-message using the sick child problem is:

"I feel frustrated and angry when you bring a sick child to my house because sick children require more care and they may be transmitting disease to the other children."

Negotiating solutions

Once the problem has been identified and the decision is made as to how to tell the other person about the problem, Ms. Hatle encourages individuals to engage in principled negotiations. In the ideal world, our partner in the problem would agree with us, say "I never knew you felt that way" and change his or her behavior. More likely, a resolution must be negotiated.

Negotiating is often viewed as taking a position--"this is what I want, this is my bottom line"--and then fighting for that and winning or eventually giving in. This style of negotiating may cost us a friend, a family in care, or from the parent's perspective, a provider.

A different approach begins by considering the interests that are at stake, both your own and those of the other parties. While these interests may be in opposition, some of them may be similar or complementary. Sometimes just having an idea of common interests can suggest possible solutions. At the very least, identifying the interests of all parties involved can give you some idea of the other person's perspective. This may make each person more flexible and sensitive to the other's needs.

Let's look at the problem of sick children in care. What are the interests of the provider, parent and others who may be affected by the solution to this problem?

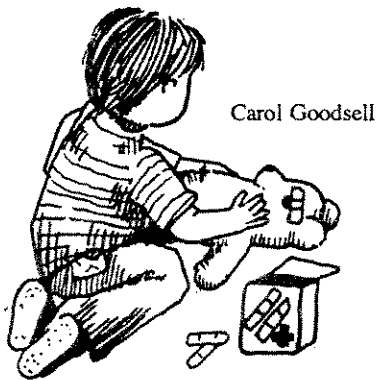
Provider's interests: concern for the health of all children in her care; concern over her own health; the extra time and stress of sick child care; need to change program plans such as outdoor play, trips or need to call in subs.

Parent's interests: need to work or go to school; unsympathetic work place; single parents; relief from stress of sick child; may be unaware of how sick child is.

Sick child & other children: sick child more comfortable and relaxed at home; other children in group may get sick; other children may not receive as much attention due to demands of sick child.

Other parents: they may have to miss work if their children get sick; consistency of policy for all parents regarding sick children.

Provider's family: health of family; extra time and stress on provider, less time or energy for her family; wear and tear on house and bedding.



Such an explicit list of interests highlights the difficulty in coming to easy solutions to problems such as this one. While it may be easy for a provider to establish a policy of absolutely no sick children, once the interests of parents are considered, such a policy may be too harsh or unreasonable and perhaps alternative solutions can be found.

Brainstorm alternatives

The next step then in the problem solving process is to brainstorm all the possible alternatives. During the brainstorming process both parties can suggest anything. Nothing is considered too outrageous, silly or unreasonable. Considering all the possible, even outrageous options helps individuals move away from set positions and enables people to look at solutions from a much broader perspective. With a much broader array of options, solutions can be individualized to best meet the needs and interests of all parties.

Again using the sick child scenario, a partial list of the options that the workshop participants brainstormed included:

- *always take sick children
- *never take sick children
- *send sick children to Ginger Ail (hospital sick child care in Madison)
- *charge extra for sick care
- *not charge for sick days so parents will keep them home--allow a certain number of sick days per year
- *have a list of subs available for parents to hire
- *hire an assistant (and charge parents) for sick child care
- *develop guidelines for parents and providers with help of the health department
- *have parents sign a pledge to fully inform provider and keep sick ones at home
- *call parent at work to come pick up child
- *have a sick room in day care home
- *parents take a course on care for sick children
- *end care

Once the options are written down, a few that seem most workable for the particular people and situations should be considered and discussed at greater length. Solutions may take some time. Individuals may need time to consider each option carefully in terms of its impact on them. Ms. Hatle stresses the importance of individualizing the solution. What may sound good on paper, or work well for one provider and parent, may be totally inappropriate for other individuals or situations. Since it is usually good policy to be consistent with all families whose children are in care, whether in a family day care home or early childhood center, parents should probably be involved in the policy making process.

The BATNA

Sometimes it is not possible to reach a common solution; sometimes circumstances or even personalities can prevent a mutual decision. In such cases Ms. Hatle advises individuals to think about their BEST ALTERNATIVE TO A NEGOTIATED AGREEMENT (BATNA). In other words, people need to think about the best that could happen if the problem is not resolved, and ways to make that best alternative more attractive or feasible. BATNA helps people decide when they may be giving up more than they are gaining in reaching a decision on the problem. In such cases, actions taken on one's own may be preferable to anything that can be worked out with another. Perhaps, in some cases, refusing to care for a sick child is the best alternative for a provider; perhaps, choosing another provider may be the best alternative for a parent.

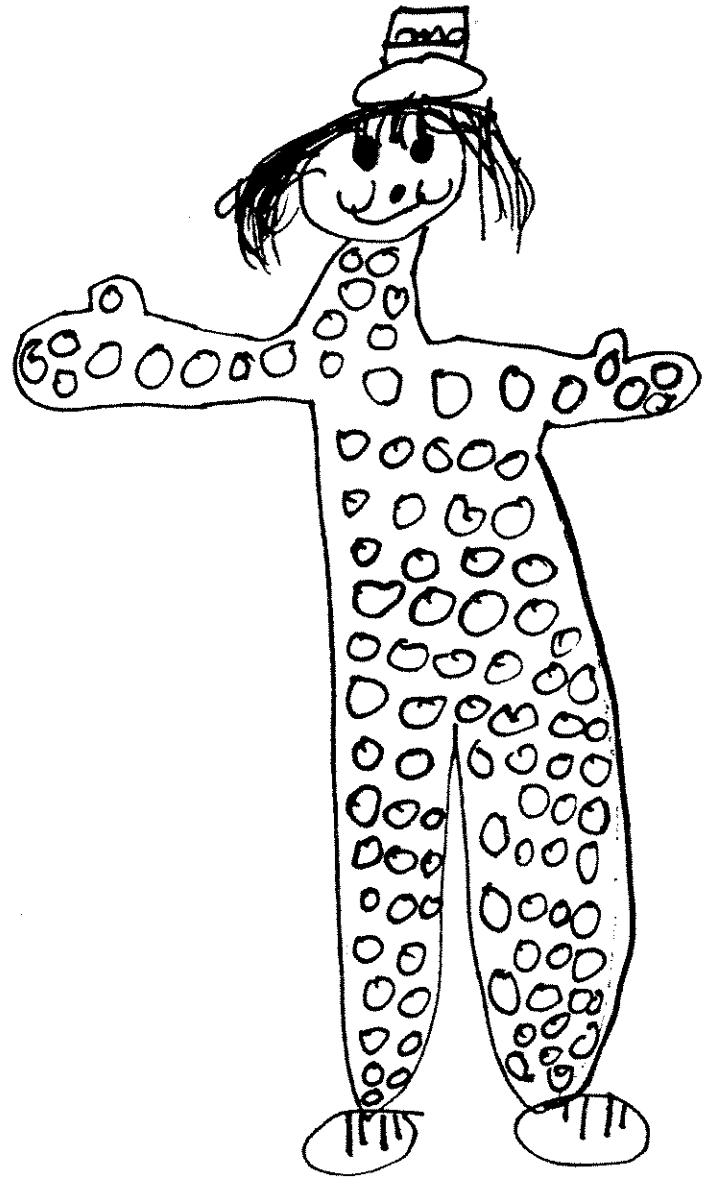
Let's summarize the steps necessary for effective problem solving:

1. Identify the problem and state it in the form of an I-message.
2. Write down all the interests of all the individuals that may be affected by the problem's solution.
3. Brainstorm all the possible solutions to the problem.
4. Consider each option carefully. Select those that seem most workable and discuss them carefully.
5. Consider the BATNA.

It should be obvious that effective problem solving is a difficult process. Ms. Hatle recommends practicing each of the techniques, beginning with small problems before tackling major issues. Practicing using I-messages with children is a great idea, according to Ms. Hatle, since children are under low stress, they won't laugh, and they certainly benefit from hearing about our feelings rather than their shortcomings. To begin the practice each of our readers should take one of the problems listed above that the family day care providers identified or choose one of your own, and practice each step with at least one other person. With practice each of you will become more confident and comfortable facing problems and finding the best solutions to those problems.

References

- Alberti, R. E. & Emmons, M. L. (1974). Your perfect right: A guide to assertive behavior. San Luis Obispo, California: IMPACT.
- Fisher, R. & Ury, W. (1981). Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in. New York: Penquin.



"Dotted Clown"
by
Anne Goodsell
(Age 5)

DAY CARE CONFERENCE

The Wisconsin Family Day Care Association
will hold its 1987 conference,

**THE CHILD CARE TAPESTRY: TOGETHER CHILD CARE, FAMILY
AND COMMUNITY WEAVE THE CHILD'S WORLD**

When: Friday, May 1, and Saturday, May 2

Where: Inn on the Park, Madison, Wisconsin

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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