How Do Parents Define Quality?

“I’ll Know It When I See It” (IKIWISI)

The National Alliance (Alliance) of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds partnered with the Washington Department of Early Learning (DEL) to seek parent’s authentic voices about what they desire for their children in a high quality child care setting. On the first day of the 2-day meeting, the diverse group of parents participated in a Community Café to identify major areas of concern and interest regarding their own personal hopes and dreams for their children’s future and the role that quality child care plays in their children’s well-being.

Based on the conversations from the first day, multiple themes emerged and were separated into four priority areas:

1. Working with Families and Communities
2. Inclusion and Diversity
3. Resources and Communication
4. Fun, Healthy and Safe Environment

As parents gathered on the second day, they followed the thread of conversations from the previous day, digging deeper into each of the priority areas and themes. Universal themes help to focus thoughts, but more concrete expressions of these themes were needed to flesh out what is meant in ways that are truly meaningful to parents. Each parent was provided with “sticky notes.” On these notes they recorded concrete examples for each priority area, stating “I’ll know it when I see it…”

What follows are parents’ responses to each priority area and the themes that were identified.
### Working With Families and Communities

#### I’ll Know It When I See It…

- Providers should learn about the child ahead of time (social, how they learn etc)
- Providers ask parents questions
- Providers initiate conversation
- Providers learn about a child’s likes/dislikes, temperament, family routines, culture
- Providers share teaching styles
- Teacher conferences, email, phone calls other meetings
- Open and honest communication
- Parents should be able to share what they want for their child; expectations about what they want their child to learn

- Community members/elders involved at the center or family child care
- Family child care should link up together or with a child care center to share resources and information
- Provide community events (trainings, guest speakers, open house); this may be more center-based
- Advertise in flyers

- Encourage the protective factors
- Provide tools, resources and classes so I can learn about the protective factors
- Talk to families at enrollment and keep them engaged
- Provide opportunities for families to come together with other families (picnics, family night, written resources to send home)

- Licenses should be displayed
- Government should only fund quality care
- Ensure that oversight is happening
- Embed the protective factors
- DEL should make sure licensors are connecting with unlicensed providers in rural areas

---

**Understanding child’s needs**

**Create community hubs**

**Strengthen the whole family**

**Government should help with relationship building**
## Inclusion and Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I’ll Know It When I See It…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Differences should be embraced; children understand that they are different but need guidance to understand that this is ok.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children should understand the beauty involved in being different; a different color, culture, language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy our similarities and things we share and learn from our differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote community and unity by encouraging diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need to provide for the needs of every child, which includes food preferences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities for each family to teach about their culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events and activities that celebrate culture, social backgrounds, religious differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t just recognize famous people from a particular culture but local people, heroes, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal traditions and holidays should be acknowledged as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention and encouragement must be given to every child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each child’s unique gifts are integrated and included in all activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs children should get to participate in all activities as long as it safe for them to do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve each child in care including those with special needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers should learn about other cultures not just their own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers need training (professional development) on cultural competency; they need books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers should make an effort to learn about each child’s culture from the beginning then learn about it (if they don’t already know).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials (including books) should be multi-cultural and not sexist/racist/ageist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers need to ASK parents about their children’s needs and not assume to know because they have other children from the same culture or of the same religion; every family is different and every child is different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classes should be given on cultural appreciation and acceptance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent support groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff should look like the children in care if possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resources and Communication

I’ll Know It When I See It…

- Resources available in the languages spoken by parents when available
- Resources about social services, community services, parenting classes, school district services, cultural community centers, PAVE, DEL, CCRR, YMCA
- Websites of interest
- Development charts that are easy to read
- Providers need to problem solve if they notice a family not reading or accessing information being sent home…there could be a reason like illiteracy
- Fliers for parents to peruse as needed
- Provider wages should reflect increased education level

- Home visits
- Families can be traditional or non-traditional; can explore family dynamics by having family events, parent/teacher meetings and meet and greet upon enrollment
- Resource Fairs or Parent Night
- Resources that will help parents improve their English so they can help their children and their community
- Tools, classes etc. that help with parenting skills and to help my children learn

- Meet with families formally and informally
- Via email, phone texts as agreed upon by provider and parent
- Newsletters
- Somebody should be available at drop-off and pick-up to communicate with me
- Providers listen to parent; when there is a problem, there is a solution identified by both parties
- Providers build trust by listening to parents; parents often just want to help
- Ask parents of children to donate adaptive toys if their child has outgrown them
- Ask parents how to ‘model’ how best to support children with special needs – “Show me”
Fun, Healthy and Safe Environment

I’ll Know It When I See It…

- In a family child care setting, infants must be kept safe while working with older children; an assistant should be hired if there is a wide age range
- Children’s hands should be washed and toys should be cleaned
- In a family child care setting, the space must be clean and look like children belong there
- There should be appropriate toys and materials for children
- Children should not be taken on errands but field trips are good for all ages
- Space should smell clean
- Outside space should be in good repair
- There should be appropriate supervision at all times
- Combinations or pass codes/keys should only be given to parents currently enrolled
- Staff know where all of the children are and what they are doing
- Facility is accessible to all children (ramps etc.)

- Children are happy to go to school; they are engaged
- Children’s art is displayed
- There are many different materials for children to play with
- Staff are interacting with children, not talking to one another ignoring children
- Many activities are offered
- My child doesn’t want to be picked up because they are having too much fun
Parents and Child Care Providers in Partnership: Planting SEEDS for Success

What’s important to families in their relationship with childcare providers?

- Each parent needs to figure out what’s best for their child—knowing the child + finding the right fit.
- Child + parent are one unit.
- Knowing the center’s ability to provide for children with special needs.
- Strengthening the “protective factors” to support providers.
- What are the needs of the caregiver?
- Pay their referral money.
- Cultural + spiritual
- Supporting the cultural backgrounds of children.
- Being inclusive rather than exclusive with family culture.
- Closing the gap between family centers & larger childcare centers.
- Educating providers to understand that special needs support can be simple...
- Equal treatment for all children regardless of economic background.
- Simple & clear.

ECI Learning Community ~ WASHINGTON

Martha Reeder, Director
Early Childhood Initiative
martha.reeder@ctfalliance.org
www.ctfalliance.org/collaborativeprojects

What does it mean? How do we engage?

Washington State Department of Early Learning
www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/qris

ECI Early Childhood Initiative
NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF CHILDREN’S TRUST & PREVENTION FUNDS