

# Pikes Peak Community College Child Development Center Project

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## CHALLENGES

### Childcare at PPCC

The scarcity of adequate, appropriate childcare at Pikes Peak Community College affects the region in several ways. The local workforce suffers when college students leave school before completing their coursework and potential students never enroll because the logistics of making quality childcare arrangements are insurmountable. Since the waiting list at our childcare center has over one hundred children left on it each semester, we know that the families of the very children who may need quality care the most are the least able to locate and afford it. It means parents who need to acquire a college education to be economically self-sufficient may have to choose between foregoing their education and placing their children in sub-standard care. In addition, because PPCC has the only certified early childhood education program in the region it should serve as the laboratory for best practices, yet the College has a 31-year-old childcare program in a facility that was last renovated in 1978.

The Child Development Center (CDC) at Pikes Peak Community College's (PPCC) Centennial Campus is a licensed, nonprofit childcare facility in operation since 1971. **The mission of the CDC is to provide care and educational services to children of PPCC students, staff, and faculty.** Currently, over 90 percent of children served are those of PPCC students. The remaining 10 percent are children of college employees. The CDC also functions as a laboratory school for college students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education Program and for high school students enrolled in the Area Vocational Program.

Established in 1968, Pikes Peak Community College (PPCC) is a two-year, post-secondary school that serves the Pikes Peak Region of Colorado (El Paso, Teller, and Elbert counties). Enrollment during academic year 2002-2003 was 15,941 students, making PPCC the largest higher education institution in the region. The College is comprised of three campuses, an online program, and multiple community-based classroom sites. Centennial Campus, in the southwest area of Colorado Springs, is the largest campus. The Downtown Studio Campus hosts the College's arts program, and the Rampart Range Campus in northern El Paso County, is the newest campus. Although enrollment at the College has more than tripled in the last 25 years, the capacity of the CDC has not increased since 1978. Unfortunately, the CDC is unable to accommodate all children and each semester approximately 50 toddlers and 60 preschoolers are left on the waiting list. Additionally, the CDC cannot accommodate the need for drop-in care during the day for students who are registering, taking tests, or conducting other campus business.

The CDC offers a day program during the spring, fall, and summer semesters. Childcare also is available during semester breaks. Current enrollment capacity is 53 children (10 in the toddler room and 43 in the preschool room). On average, each semester 65 children ages one through five are enrolled in the day program on both part-time and full-time schedules. Although enrollment at the College has more than tripled in the last 25 years, the capacity of the CDC has not increased since 1978.

Childcare available through other providers in reasonable proximity to the Centennial Campus also is quite limited. In the three zip codes that include the Centennial Campus and its surroundings, there are a total of 18 childcare centers and 170 family care homes offering 2,148 childcare slots for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. However, only limited slots are available to low-income parents who need an income-based sliding scale fee.

In addition, there is no childcare facility at PPCC's Rampart Range Campus, located on Hwy 83 in the northernmost part of Colorado Springs. This campus houses the nursing and allied health profession programs—programs whose students have a particularly high need for childcare. Other childcare centers in the immediate area are even scarcer than those near Centennial Campus. A feasibility study determined that there is a demand for 857 childcare slots in this area and, with only five centers located there, not even half that demand can be met.

Countywide, of the 199 childcare centers available, 41 percent have ten or fewer openings, 29 percent have five or less, and 17 percent (most located in areas with the highest concentrations of low-income families) have no openings. Of the 727 licensed family homes, 81 percent have three or fewer openings and 40 percent have no openings (*Creating the Future: A Community Challenge*, 2001, p. 19).

Seventy percent of CDC enrollments are children of low-income parents. The primary sources of financial assistance for these students have been the federal Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF). In addition, many lower income students do not meet the requirements for these programs and yet cannot afford the full cost of childcare.

### **Laboratory School for the Early Childhood Education Program**

When a college's child development center also serves as a laboratory school for an early childhood education program, it is important that the center's program and facility is of the highest possible quality. A lab setting where Early Childhood Education (ECE) students can see classroom theory taking place and can observe best practices is essential. The center serves as a model for future teachers and administrators, many of whom will be involved in planning and decision making for new childcare centers.

PPCC's Early Childhood Education Program is a popular option for childcare workers looking to enhance their skills and new students wanting to enter the childcare profession. The ECE program is respected throughout the community and is expected to produce highly qualified workers not only for PPCC's Child Development Center but other centers in the community as well. The ECE program boasts a high enrollment that averages over 225 students each year. Demand for the ECE program graduates is very high and constant. Because the program is in high demand, the College has made ECE courses available in a multitude of formats including; weekend, Internet, independent study, evening and day, military site, and community training courses.

Students in the Early Childhood Education program use the CDC as a laboratory school for their practicum and for observation assignments. Because there is currently only one CDC facility, the opportunities to use the facility as a laboratory are severely restricted by CDC hours of operation

and lack of space. The need for time in a lab school for the Early Childhood Education program and other academic programs is far greater than the CDC can accommodate. Further, the Child Development Center cannot accommodate school-age children or infants at this time. These barriers keep the CDC from fully realizing its lab school function. A lab school that can operate at a higher level will affect the quality of childcare in the community for years to come through training of the childcare workforce.

Despite the constant need for qualified childcare providers, PPCC is the only institution in the Pikes Peak region offering an Early Childhood Education program. Because the ECE is the only state-sponsored program in the region, it must be expanded to accommodate the growing need for workers. Unfortunately, the size of the lab school currently at the CDC limits any expansion.

### **The CDC as a Laboratory for Other Academic Disciplines**

The Child Development Center also is an important laboratory resource for students in other academic disciplines. For example, the CDC is an important resource for nursing students to learn to perform developmental assessments and for observations throughout their Pediatric rotation. Nursing students from Beth El College of Nursing at CU-Springs also use the CDC for observations during their pediatric rotations.

In the past, Psychology students have observed the CDC children as part of their work in several different courses. At present, space and time constraints at the CDC prevent them from using this resource. Students in the Social Services Technician program also would benefit from being able to observe the effects of the use of discipline among the CDC children and learn to recognize developmental needs of youth at risk. But, again, their time at the CDC is extremely limited due to the space allocation at the facility and the limited hours of operation.

Faculty and students from the programs mentioned above along with others from the Natural Resources Technology, Spanish, Dental Hygiene, and Emergency Medical Services Programs also are interested in more expanded use of the Child Development Center as a laboratory school.

Interaction between the Child Development Center staff and students and faculty from other academic disciplines is synergistic; all involved come away with far more than they give. The exchange of ideas and best practices, relationship building, and mentoring opportunities are just a few of the added benefits in these collaborations. Increasing interaction also broadens the experience for children attending the CDC, as they meet adults from a range of careers and professions.

## **SOLUTIONS**

### **Project Goal**

Pikes Peak Community College plays a critical role in meeting the demand for high-quality childcare services in the community. **The goal for this project is to increase the amount of affordable, accessible, high-quality childcare for the PPCC students and the College**

**community and provide laboratory schools that exemplify best practices for future childcare professionals.**

The need for high-quality child development centers that serve as laboratory schools at PPCC has been identified as a priority issue for the College. To investigate this issue, the College established a Childcare Task Force in 2001. The mission of this Task Force was to:

- ❖ Address the needs of students for childcare,
- ❖ Address service gaps and means of expanding childcare on the Centennial Campus and adding childcare at the Rampart Range Campus,
- ❖ Mount a campaign to identify and access funding sources to sustain a sliding fee scale at both campuses,
- ❖ Create a variety of solutions to meet childcare needs on campus.

The Task Force undertook a variety of activities and analyses to accomplish their mission. These included: a survey of the PPCC students at-large; a survey of parents with children currently enrolled in the CDC; childcare facility site visits; and review of current documents and data describing the PPCC student body, usage of the CDC, and unmet needs.

Chief among these analyses was a study conducted by White Hutchinson Leisure & Learning Group, an internationally renowned consulting group specializing in design of indoor and outdoor children's environments. This study identified both significant strengths and significant concerns related to the ability of the CDC to provide high quality care to the children and families it serves. The two primary concerns stated in the White Hutchinson Report are:

- ❖ Physical facilities are inadequate and do not meet the standards for provision of high quality early childhood programs and,
- ❖ The current demand for childcare is not being met and demand is projected to grow in the next five years

Based on these findings, the Childcare Task Force, in conjunction with Pikes Peak Community College staff, the PPCC Foundation, and student government leaders engaged in a thorough process to consider needs for childcare expansion, alternatives to meet those needs, and a sound proposal to fund expansion. At the conclusion of this process, these leaders jointly committed to implementing the CDC expansion project.

**Project Objectives**

The College has established four objectives to meet the childcare goal:

1. Broadening access to childcare at PPCC.
2. Improving the affordability of that care.
3. Continuously improving the quality of the Child Development Center
4. Expanding the capacity of the CDC as a lab school for academic programs and strengthening the partnership between the CDC and the ECE Program.

**1. Broaden access to childcare services.** We must increase access to high-quality care for all those students who need and want to use the services of the Child Development Center at Centennial Campus and create a child development center at the Rampart Range Campus. Students at the Downtown Studio Campus must be able to access childcare services at either location.

The College administration has agreed to build new CDC facilities on the Centennial and Rampart Range Campuses. The Centennial facility will be approximately 15,350 sq. ft. with eleven classrooms serving 130 children. The Rampart facility will be approximately 11,449 sq. ft. containing eight classrooms serving 98 children. The specifications used in determining the space requirements for the Centers are based on standards established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), The Army Corp of Engineers, the American Public Health Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and Harvard and Tufts Universities. *(See Appendix for building specifications.)*

In addition to classrooms and outdoor play spaces for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, the new centers will include the following:

- ❖ Drop in childcare rooms for 3-12 year olds
- ❖ Gross motor/multipurpose rooms
- ❖ Observation areas for parents and PPCC students
- ❖ Isolation areas for sick children
- ❖ Kitchen and laundry rooms
- ❖ Staff/parent resource rooms
- ❖ Staff work areas for planning and curriculum development
- ❖ Small conference rooms for meeting with parents and students
- ❖ Director's and Assistant Director's offices
- ❖ Reception areas
- ❖ Staff and visitor restrooms

### **Proposed Construction Timeline**

At this time the College has obtained all the required approvals from the State College System and the State Legislature Budget Committee. We are currently selecting an architect who will finalize the building plans.

Mar. 2003:	Final plan development and approval
Mar. – Apr. 2003:	Selection of contractor
Apr. 2003:	Break ground
Sept.-Oct. 2003:	Construction complete
Oct. 2003:	Open Centers

**2. Improve affordability of childcare services.** An essential feature of the Child Development Center at PPCC is affordability. Last year, the College secured a CCAMPIS (Childcare Access Means Parents in School) grant from the U.S. Department of Education to implement a sliding fee scale. These grant funds pay the difference between a student's federal Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) allocation (or amount they are able to afford if they are not CCAP-

eligible) and the daily cost of care. However, this grant expires in 2004 and the College will need to find other ways to keep daily rates affordable.

In April 2002, the PPCC Student Government successfully lobbied for passage of two student bond fees. The money raised from the new fees will be applied toward the construction and operating costs of the new childcare centers. The bond issues were passed by 72 percent of the students who voted, which speaks strongly of students' support for a solution to childcare issues at the College. The student fee related to construction will not exceed \$20 per semester for a full-time student and will sunset once the construction costs have been paid. The student fee for operations, which will not exceed \$5 per semester for a full-time student, will be charged in perpetuity and will help to keep the cost of care affordable for students and insure that the CDC operation continues to break even.

**The new facilities have been sized to ensure financial sustainability.** However, additional funds will be needed to offset the higher cost of daily childcare rates students will pay at the CDC. **The sliding fee is crucial for sustainability of the CDC as a service for low-income students.** The Foundation is raising funds to offset the cost of capital construction and to assure a sliding fee scale in perpetuity.

**3. Continuously improve the quality of childcare.** In addition to providing accessible, affordable services to children of students, the CDC is resolved that those services be of high quality—all children deserve no less. The CDC approaches its commitment to quality in many ways including: recruiting qualified staff and providing them with regular supervision and opportunities for professional development; utilizing a developmentally appropriate approach to environments, curriculum, and care; and participating in innovative programs available in the community. *(See Appendix for resumes of key staff.)*

The feasibility study by the White Hutchinson Group found significant strengths in the quality of care provided at the Child Development Center, specifically in the staffing area. They stated the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator both had “extensive skills and expertise” and the teachers met “stringent guidelines”. They also noted that the curriculum and classroom materials were “developmentally appropriate” for toddlers and preschoolers. Concerns expressed in the study about the quality of care were “reflections on the limitations of the physical facility”

### **NAEYC Accreditation Process**

A primary mechanism to assure a high-quality program is through renewal of the CDC's National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation—the gold standard in the world of childcare. Offered by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, NAEYC accreditation is a three-step process involving:

1. Self-study to determine how well the program meets the criteria and to make improvements
2. Validation during which trained childcare experts make an on-site visit
3. Accreditation decision by a three-person commission selected by the NAEYC.

The Academy defines a high-quality early childhood program as one that meets the needs of and promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of the children and adults—families, staff, and administrators—who are involved in the program.

### **Quality Curriculum**

The PPCC Child Development Center is conscientious about providing multicultural curriculum and materials in order to be inclusive of all children and families. This effort, as well, is ongoing. Regardless of their particular racial, ethnic, or cultural background, children and families entering the classrooms see themselves reflected in books, dolls, posters, and other materials. Interpreters are available as needed to assist staff in communicating with children and to assure that parents receive communication in their primary or preferred language. This includes interpreters for the deaf since PPCC is the regional Deaf College Preparatory program and there are a high number of deaf students on campus.

### **Parental Involvement**

An underlying principle of care for young children in partnership with their families is that of respectful, caring relationships with both the child and his/her family. The Director and staff of the Child Development Center embrace this principle as a core value. This value is the cornerstone of assuring equal treatment for all children and families.

Parents are respected and valued as their child's first and best teacher. Thus, the CDC encourages parent involvement on many levels. Parents are invited and encouraged to volunteer on a regular basis and for special events. Parents are always free to join their child for lunch and to visit throughout the day. Parents are regularly informed of other campus parenting opportunities, events, and resources such as:

- ❖ Parenting and child development resource collection in the PPCC library and the children's section of the library.
- ❖ A home/school connection activity in every weekly lesson plan for all classes.
- ❖ Take-home language activities developed by teachers.
- ❖ Parent/teacher conferences each fall and spring semester.
- ❖ Monthly newsletters and daily activity schedules posted in each classroom.
- ❖ Individual progress notes sent home with each child several times per week.

In conjunction with the Parents' Association (a campus club funded by student government and open to all parents), parenting events and workshops are offered free to CDC enrolled families. The Child Development Center assures parent representation on groups that will have input into the program. There will be parent membership on the CDC Advisory Board (including parents who participate in the sliding scale fee) and parent representation on the advisory group for NAEYC accreditation.

Continual development of new partnerships to assist with outreach to low-income parents remains a priority. Currently enrolled parents are asked for input on effective strategies to reach their peers. In addition to general awareness, the CDC and the College strive to understand and address any other barriers that stand between low-income parents and their ability to attend PPCC. An example of eliminating barriers is the College's persistence (and success) in

advocating with the City of Colorado Springs for adequate bus service to its various campus locations.

**4. Expand the Capacity of the CDC as a lab school.** Maximizing use of the Child Development Center as a laboratory school will allow the Early Childhood Education program to serve more students. With the completion of the Rampart Range Campus CDC, Early Childhood Education students will have access to the facilities at both campuses, which will expand their opportunities to complete their practicum right on campus and ease the scheduling challenges many encounter trying to juggle courses, practicum, family obligations and part time jobs. In addition, using the CDC will allow the placement of all practicum students from the ECE Program in high quality classroom environments led by well-trained staff who also mentor the students-in-training. An added advantage is the close supervision of ECE students by the Early Childhood Ed faculty and the CDC staff while using the CDC as a lab school.

With the new facilities available, there will also be ample space and operating time for faculty from the Nursing, Psychology, and Social Services Technician programs to arrange for observation blocks for their students each semester. Also, the Child Development Center will continue to be available to students at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs' Beth El School of Nursing and by other PPCC academic programs, such as Emergency Medical Services and Dental Hygiene.

## OUTCOMES

Broadening the accessibility, maintaining the affordability, and continuously improving the quality of the Child Development Center at PPCC, while simultaneously enhancing the use of the CDC as a laboratory school, will result in numerous immediate and long-term beneficial outcomes. Benefits for the students, their children, and the College include:

- ❖ Increasing the number of PPCC graduates because parents will be able to finish their skills training or college education.
- ❖ Caring for children in a nurturing environment and will help them mature to be healthy, socially competent youngsters ready to excel at school.
- ❖ Involving parents at the CDC will support parent-child bonding at a time when parents will need to focus a great deal of attention on school work.
- ❖ Increasing the number of children in care will spread CDC overhead costs out and decrease the daily cost of care for all recipients.
- ❖ Helping low-income parents with their childcare should greatly improve their ability to focus on coursework and finish their education (parents receiving Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) funds in Colorado must complete their education in two years).

Continuously improving the quality of care and renewing the National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation will benefit students, their children, and the College by:

- ❖ Creating a high quality childcare setting for children on the PPCC campus.

- ❖ Assuring parents that their children are in an excellent setting while they attend class.
- ❖ Assisting the CDC and PPCC to leverage other dollars to support the CDC in the future.
- ❖ Qualifying the Child Development Center to apply for many local grants that have NAEYC accreditation as an eligibility requirement.
- ❖ Increasing the CDC's credibility as an important voice in the early care and education community in the region.
- ❖ Improving the quality of education that Early Childhood Education program students—and students in other academic programs in the region—receive because of the laboratory school-related improvements at the CDC.

### **Community Benefits**

Expanding the capacity of the Child Development Center as a lab school and improving the Early Childhood Education Program at PPCC will have far-reaching effects on the community including:

- ❖ Increasing the number of parents who are experienced at balancing work and family obligations,
- ❖ Expanding the number of college completers and graduates in the region,
- ❖ Improving the ability of professionals in fields like nursing, social work, and psychology to understand child development and family dynamics,
- ❖ Training a larger number of professional childcare workers in a high quality laboratory setting, and
- ❖ Creating more high quality childcare in the Pikes Peak region.

### **Coordination with Academic Programs**

The Child Development Center is a laboratory training and observational site for students in the Early Childhood Education program as well as for students enrolled in other programs at the College such as Nursing, Social Services, and Psychology and the Beth El School of Nursing at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. Fostering and expanding the relationship between faculty, students, and CDC staff and children:

- ❖ Allows the CDC to implement high quality curriculum with Early Childhood Education faculty input.
- ❖ Gives the Child Development Center staff the opportunity to teach and mentor Early Childhood Education students.
- ❖ Provides a place where child development theory can be seen in practice.
- ❖ Creates additional support for CDC children who benefit from increased adult-to-child ratios in their classrooms.
- ❖ Helps students receive practical experience and ongoing consultation from CDC Lead Teachers and the Assistant Coordinator.
- ❖ Affords students the hands-on experience they need about appropriate ways to involve parents in the childcare setting and techniques to gain parental involvement.

## EVALUATION- MEASURING SUCCESS

Data documenting the impact of this grant on childcare quality, availability, and affordability will be collected in several ways. First, the NAEYC accreditation process and documentation thereof will address the quality issue. The NAEYC requires extensive reporting about matters such as interactions among teachers and children, health and safety, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development, and relationships among teachers and families. The accreditation instrument of the NAEYC is a valid, reliable source for measuring success of the CDC. Published assessment instruments such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales also are used and will help define needed program improvements.

The implementation of a sliding fee scale was vital in increasing affordability and availability for low-income students. Having the support of CCAMPIS funds to assure that the CDC receives the full cost of care means low-income students will have access to affordable childcare services on campus. Data will be collected and reported on the number of low-income students served, including a comparison with prior years. Data also will be collected and reported on the various means that the Child Development Center and PPCC conduct outreach activities to assure potential students learn about the availability of childcare on campus.

The College routinely records and tracks data on graduation and completion rates for students by academic program. This will allow us to track the CDC's effect on completion and graduation rates for the College as a whole as well as for ECE students. In addition, the ECE program tracks placement of its graduates. This information combined with input from the ECE Program's Community Advisory Board will help the College revise the program.

## COMMITMENTS ALREADY SECURED AND SUSTAINABILITY OF PROGRAM

The College and the CDC are able to leverage significant resources in support of the Child Development Center. The following resources are available.

**Social services funding:** The CDC is an approved CCCAP and TANF childcare provider. This partnership with the El Paso County Department of Human Services has been quite successful and both parties are committed to its continuation and potential expansion through increasing childcare slots and the age range of children that can be served. However, without additional funding support, this partnership may have to be limited. There is a significant difference between the cost of providing high quality care accessible to PPCC students and the payment rate of CCAP and TANF.

**Support from student government:** Currently, approximately 15 percent (\$20,000) of the PPCC general student activity fee is paid to the CDC as a subsidy. The student government has agreed to pay this amount annually in order to offset losses sustained due to the gap between CCCAP/TANF payments and the full cost of care. When the new student bond fee is assessed, student government will no longer contribute part of the general activity fee to the CDC.

However, the new student bond fee will provide approximately \$100,000 each year to supplement annual operating revenues for ongoing operation and maintenance.

**Foundation and/or corporate support:** The PPCC Foundation supported the CDC by financially supporting the work of the Childcare Task Force. The Foundation spent more than \$20,000 to complete the initial feasibility study. To date, the Foundation Board members have pledged \$26,850 in personal support and adopted the CDC fundraising campaign as their priority for academic years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004.

The Daniels Fund has donated \$50,000 and the Temple Hoyne Buell Foundation has committed to a \$10,000 gift. The Colorado Springs Community Trust and the Giddings Foundations have granted \$5,000 each to the CDC Expansion Project. None of the funds raised will be used for Foundation administration expenses

**Other institutional support:** Since the CDC is a laboratory school the instructional division of the College annually contributes \$40,000 from the College's general fund. In addition, several College offices support development and implementation of the sliding fee scale including Financial Aid, Financial Services, and Computer Services. **Finally, an additional \$12,000 in pledges and gifts have been secured through an employee giving campaign that began in December 2002.**

Additionally, the time and effort of the Childcare Task Force in working toward sustainability and overall expansion of childcare services at PPCC is a major resource. They, in turn, will use their efforts to leverage additional resources such as corporate and foundation support.

## FUNDING PLAN

**Because childcare is considered an enterprise of the College, the CDC cannot be built or financed by Colorado general fund dollars.** Therefore, College administrators, students, and PPCC Foundation officials have worked together to create a funding plan for the expansion of childcare at PPCC. The CCAMPIS grant and the student bond fees described on page 4 are vital first steps in this funding plan. Although the new facilities have been sized to ensure financial sustainability, additional funds will be needed to offset the higher cost of daily childcare rates students will pay at the CDC. The sliding fee is crucial for sustainability of the CDC as a service for low- income students. **The Foundation is raising funds to offset the cost of construction and to assure a sliding fee scale in perpetuity.**

The PPCC Foundation has embarked on an aggressive fundraising campaign. Foundation members and staff identified more than fifteen local and national foundations as well as numerous businesses in the community that are potential supporters of the Child Development Center at PPCC. We are soliciting The El Pomar Foundation in Colorado Springs for a challenge grant that would serve as a lead gift to be met by contributions from other private foundations. *(See attached list of prospective donors.)* There also are federal and state grant funds for which the College's Office of Institutional Advancement and Development is applying. The PPCC

Foundation and College officials set a fundraising goal of \$340,000. **Funds are being raised for capital construction expenses, to furnish and equip the Center, and for ongoing operation of the Center.**

**We respectfully request a \$XXXX grant from The XXXXX Foundation. The entire grant will be used for capital construction expenses and to insure the viability of the sliding scale fee.**

On behalf of the PPCC Foundation Board of Directors, thank you for considering our request.