

Shaping Bright Futures

How Mentorship is Expanding Childcare in the Monadnock Region

Families in the Monadnock Region often face challenges finding affordable, quality childcare due to long waitlists and staffing shortages. To address this, Monadnock United Way (MUW) and Keene State College (KSC) lead the Child Care Expansion Task Force under the federally funded Child Care Expansion (CCE) project.* This initiative strengthens the local childcare system by supporting programs like the **Childhood Development Associate (CDA) with Mentorship**. This article is part of a series highlighting the efforts and initiatives driving positive change in local childcare through the CCE project

Pursuing a CDA credential can seem overwhelming at first, requiring hours of technical education, work experience, and assessments. However, mentorship has made this process manageable and transformative for educators at The Winchester Learning Center.

“The mentorship component of our CDA program is huge and why it has been such a success,” says Executive Director Roberta Royce. “I meet candidates where they are at, so we’re not expecting everyone to begin from the same place. The program is completely individualized, with personal support available for each candidate.”



“If they get stuck, we don’t push past—we support what they need in that moment.”

This flexibility helps candidates build confidence at their own pace, with a program that adapts to their circumstances. “If a candidate needs to take a break, it’s ok. If they want to go through quickly, it’s ok,” Royce explains.

This personalized mentorship has been a game-changer for The Winchester Learning Center and its staff. With four CDA-certified teachers, the Center exceeded licensing requirements and added up to 18 additional childcare slots, expanding capacity to 78 children. “The morale has been amazing,” Royce shares. One staff member especially took pride in applying new knowledge from infant brain development training, sparking even more passion for her work.

Teachers have also earned raises, promotions, and bonuses, and even pursued further education. Royce recalls one candidate who said she never thought she could take a college class but did so after the CDA and earned an A.

Other organizations, like Sophia’s Hearth, are also reaping the rewards. Childcare Director Paula Sousa described the mentorship model as clear, flexible, and supportive, calling it “an important offering for dedicated early childhood educators on their career paths.”



Scan this code for more information about the Child Care Expansion project.
www.muw.org/cce.



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