

Supporting Family Child Care in Philadelphia

A Framework for a Philadelphia Family Child Care Collaborative

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Introduction

In 2017, Erikson Institute launched a year-long project to develop a collaborative network of agencies in Philadelphia that had the capacity to coordinate services for family child care providers. Earlier work with a large group of Philadelphia public and private early childhood agency stakeholders in 2016 resulted in the concept of a *Referral Continuum*, a pipeline of supports that takes family child care providers from initial licensing through accreditation, the highest level of quality in Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS quality rating and improvement system (Porter & Bromer, 2017). The current project extended this earlier work and aimed to plan a collective effort to meet the needs of family child care providers in Philadelphia through operationalizing the *Referral Continuum* to fill gaps in services.

During 2017 and 2018, Erikson Institute and Early Care and Education Consulting, in collaboration with three key agency partners—the Public Health Management Corporation, the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA, and First Up (formerly the Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children) – facilitated a series of three stakeholder meetings and monthly leadership phone calls to help the full group identify specific activities that the potential collaborative could undertake. Unlike the 2016 effort, the collaborative activities included a provider leadership group to voice the perspectives of family child care providers, a crucial element that had been missing in the earlier discussions. The provider leadership group participated in all of the planning and met independently in meetings that followed the full stakeholder meetings as well as through monthly phone calls.

Over the course of a year, a strong consensus emerged about the need for a collaborative that would focus exclusively on family child care, because these providers play an essential role in the child care supply through their care of infants and toddlers, families of color, new immigrants, and families who need non-traditional-hour care. There was also strong agreement that a family child care-focused collaborative with a strong provider voice was needed to meet the unique needs and circumstances of family child care that are distinct from those of centers and other preschool settings. By bridging the gap among policy makers, agencies, and providers, the collaborative would have the potential to influence policy and improve supports for this sector of the child care supply.

A Framework for A Philadelphia Family Child Care Collaborative

This brief presents the framework for the proposed family child care collaborative. Envisioned by the agency and provider stakeholders as a central hub housed in an existing agency, most likely an Early Learning Resource Center, the Collaborative would have a four-pronged objective: 1) to strengthen services and develop new initiatives to support providers; 2) to continue asset mapping of services and provider needs to identify gaps; 3) to improve communication among agencies and providers to facilitate access to services and to inform policy discussions through a collective voice; and 4) to increase opportunities for partnerships with providers to support representation of family child care in policy discussions and leadership (See Figure 1).

The Collaborative would be guided by a Steering Committee that would include provider leaders, agency leaders, and local and state policy makers. Primary activities would include:

A Family Child Care-Focused Website:

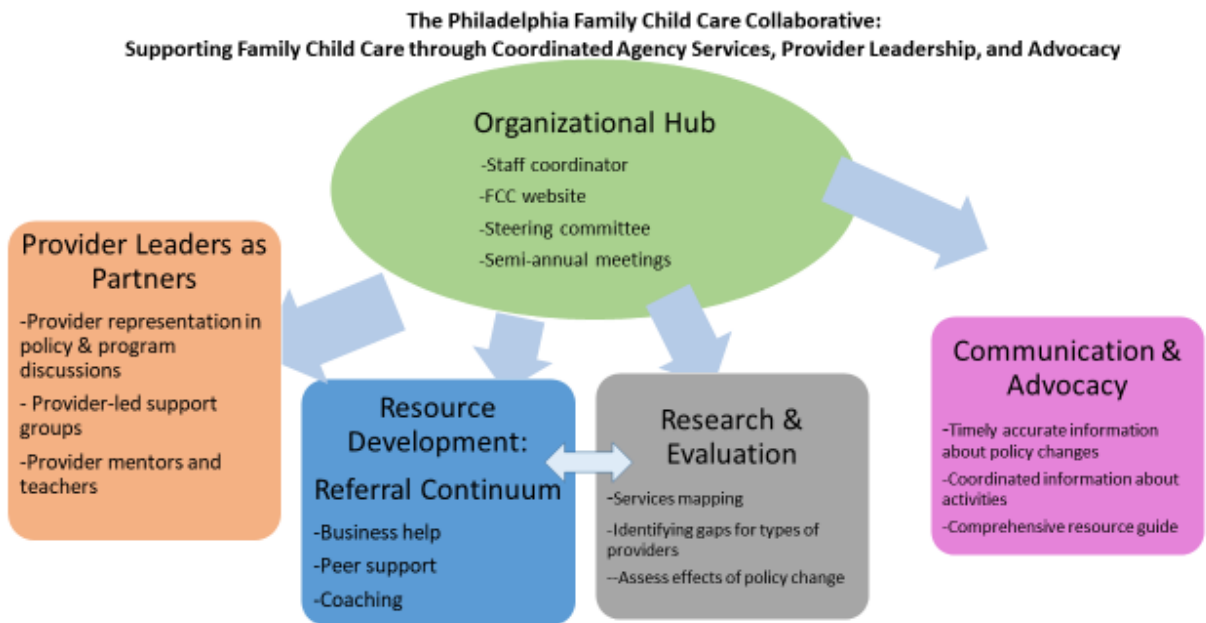
- Centralized information about trainings and other opportunities for family child care throughout the city
- Links to agencies, provider groups, and other resources as well as a platform for providers to contribute content
- Training calendars, policy updates, provider group meetings

Semi-Annual Stakeholder Meetings:

- Provider leaders
- Agency leaders
- City and state policy makers and administrators
- Funders

The Collaborative would be staffed by a coordinator who would be responsible for curating and updating the website, coordinating semi-annual stakeholder meetings, conducting outreach to provider groups around the City as well as agencies who support family child care, and answering phone calls from providers.

Figure 1: The Philadelphia Family Child Care Collaborative



Policy Context

The years spanning 2016-2018 represented a period of rapid change in the policy landscape for family child care providers in Philadelphia. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was implementing a set of policy changes related to the Child Care and Development Fund Block Grant (CCDBG) reauthorization. It was revising certification requirements to comply with the new CCDBG regulations; re-visioning the STARS Quality Rating and Improvement (QRIS) standards; replacing the existing system of regional keys support for providers; and developing a new Professional Development Registry.

At the same time, the City of Philadelphia was implementing new health and safety requirements related to lead paint certification for providers. The Mayor's Office created a Regulatory Reform Commission to examine regulations to help family child care businesses. In addition, the City was expanding PHLPreK, the City's universal preschool program for three- and four-year-old children.

Objective 1: Resource Development and Strengthening Services to Meet Provider Needs

Several broad gaps emerged from the 2016 stakeholder discussions. Limited supports for providers were available in many neighborhoods in Philadelphia, including North and Northeast Philadelphia as well as Germantown. In addition, services and supports were needed for providers who did not speak English or Spanish, and who may not have high literacy levels. There was also a gap in supports for new and inexperienced providers: many services were only available for STARS 3 and 4 providers or those who participated in PHLPreK. Some financial assistance opportunities were only open to center-based programs.

Building on the initial *Referral Continuum*, participants in the stakeholder meetings in 2017-2018 engaged in two mapping activities designed to identify strengths and gaps in services and supports for family child care providers at each of the three full stakeholder meetings.

These stakeholder meetings identified three specific gaps in services: 1) business support; 2) peer support; and 3) coaching. Four agencies reported offering business supports, primarily start-up help with basic record-keeping and compliance. As of 2017, no agency offered family child care business or financial management training. The only available formal peer support was through the provider-led Quality Influential Providers (QIP) support group, which convened monthly meetings to exchange services, share expertise, as well as discuss common concerns. The QIP also currently manages a Facebook group with information about trainings, policy changes, and conversations among providers.

Although nine agencies reported offering some form of home visiting or coaching to family child care providers, the programs served only a fraction of the family child care providers in Philadelphia and most entailed monthly or fewer visits in English and Spanish. Only one program articulated offering weekly visits. Some programs used curriculum to guide visits, while others used the STARS standards to guide coaching.

Business and Financial Management Services for Family Child Care

Without strong and healthy businesses, family child care providers cannot keep their doors open to serve families and children. Below are strategies that emerged from stakeholder and provider meetings.

Strategies:

- **Develop shared services.** Shared services is an approach that offers family child care providers back-office administrative and business support, bulk purchasing, and training through pooling resources and using cost efficiencies to reduce expenses for individual providers (Opportunities Exchange, 2018). For family child care, shared services could help providers obtain liability and health insurance, a qualified substitute caregiver pool, accounting and tax services, and even transportation. *First Up's* new project to create a shared services approach may be a useful model that could be expanded.
- **Provide basic business supports.** Some of the supports that family child care providers need may look different from the services offered to centers. Family child care providers need help with insurance selection and purchase, bookkeeping and accounting services, tax help, legal support, marketing, enrollment, and substitute care. The Women's Business Center offered these supports in years past and may be a useful model to revisit.
- **Help with financial management.** As one provider put it, "family child care is not cut and paste," but involves often complicated financial decisions and practices beyond basic recordkeeping. Giving family child care providers access to existing financial training for centers as well as developing new financial management training for family child care providers are possible next steps.
- **Offer webinars and a telephone warm-line to supplement training workshops or series on business and financial management.** Providers may need ongoing support around business practices.

"Business practices and the use of budgets and projections allow providers to plan and make informed decisions on issues such as enrollment, quality enhancements, and employee benefits. Family child care providers who cannot sustain their programs may leave the field due to the stress of balancing program revenues and expenses. Such stress may also shape a provider's capacity to offer responsive and sensitive care to children. Business support may free up time for providers to focus on their interactions with children and the learning environment."

(Bromer & Porter, 2019)

Peer Support

The stakeholders identified several strategies for enhancing opportunities for peer support in which providers can share and learn from each other and reduce the isolation that many may experience.

Strategies:

- **Create a talent bank among family child care providers.** Family child care providers are an untapped resource for professional development and technical assistance. Many experienced family child care providers have expertise in a range of areas related to operating a child care business and educating young children. Some providers may find it “easier to take suggestions and listen to those who are doing the same work as their peers. It is different than having Trainers come in to show you the ‘right way’ to do things.” As agencies develop new programs for family child care providers, finding ways to tap into the expertise and knowledge of current providers may be a promising strategy.

“Peer support, including opportunities to socialize, build relationships, and solve problems together is important as FCC can be isolating. FCC providers may have limited access to information, training, and resources on quality child care or quality improvement opportunities. They may also find it difficult to attend offsite training during the day when they are providing care to children with little or no backup staffing support.”

(Bromer & Porter, 2017)

- **Adapt *Strengthening Families Parent Cafes* for family child care.** Parent Cafes are currently underway with families in Philadelphia.
- **Facilitate peer-to-peer mentoring.** Beyond the QIP, First Up has a new project to facilitate peer learning opportunities around OCDEL’s suspension and expulsion policy as well as to train family child care providers to be coaches for STAR 1 and 2 providers. These could become models for expansion and replication in the city.

Coaching and Technical Assistance Focused on Family Child Care Quality

In-person opportunities for coaching and technical assistance allow providers to ask questions and engage with other early childhood professionals. Yet, limited capacity and large caseloads make it difficult for coaches and specialists to reach the majority of family child care providers in Philadelphia.

Strategies:

- **Provide specialized family child care coaching that focuses on the distinct challenges faced by family child care.** Managing mixed-age groups of children and working with parents and families are two areas where providers may benefit from individualized coaching and support.

“Research suggests that coaching or consultation visits with HBCC providers that focus on quality caregiving may be an effective and promising approach for improving quality (Bromer & Korfmacher, 2017; McCabe & Cochran, 2008; Porter et al., 2010). Some studies also find that the dosage of visits is related to quality with frequent visits associated with higher-quality care.”

(Bromer & Porter, 2019)

- **Offer supports for family child care providers' educational advancement.** This may include advising and financial help for providers to move from a CDA to a bachelor's to a master's and beyond.
- **Support family child care provider participation in National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation.** Many family child care providers find *NAFCC Accreditation* demanding and expensive. Communities of practice or cohorts combined with coaching such as those implemented by *First Up* (DVAEYC) may be promising approaches to expand.

Objective 2: Research and Evaluation of Services and Supports

Mapping gaps in services, alignment across agencies, and collective agency strengths and challenges in the 2016 meetings played an essential role in the consensus for a need to build a system-wide strategy through a collaborative effort to support family child care in Philadelphia. The 2017-2018 stakeholder meetings deepened this work, identifying gaps in populations of types of providers served as well as service delivery dosage and content in business support, peer support, and coaching.

Understanding the changes in the policy, service delivery and funding landscape strengthens the collaborative's potential to expand the family child care supply and improve the quality of care that providers offer.

An important implication of this work is the value of understanding the policy and services landscape in efforts to improve quality. Gathering perspectives from multiple stakeholders provided valuable insights into provider, agency and system needs.

(Porter & Bromer, 2017)

Strategies:

- **Consider development of a shared data system to track provider participation in services and provider outcomes through the *Referral Continuum*.** For its 2016 evaluation of the Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA Family Child Care Network, Erikson Institute developed an accessible, easy-to-manage system for collecting data. The system could be tested with other agencies, and if effective, could be adopted by all Collaborative members, including provider groups. The Collaborative could develop common metrics for identifying providers served and service delivery strategies which could improve services coordination as well as inform policy directions for meeting family child care providers' needs.
- **Use data to assess the effects of policy changes.** Through its cross-agency, cross-provider reach, the Collaborative could gather data on short- and long-term effects of policy changes on family child care that could then inform future policy directions.
- **Draw on systematic data about services gaps to test innovative strategies using the rapid cycle approach for quality improvement.** The Erikson Institute is engaged in a pilot Family Child Care Learning Collaborative, in which nine agency teams of staff and providers are using the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) approach for continuous quality improvement. The BSC approach builds on rapid small-scale tests undertaken across agency teams to reach a common

aim. The Philadelphia Family Child Care Collaborative could consider adopting this strategy to enhance peer support and/or coaching for providers.

Objective 3: Communication and Advocacy

Cross-agency communication ranked second after business supports as a need and benefit for providers. There was consensus about the need for a central source of timely, consistent information about new requirements and systems changes, agency services, and provider activities.

Concerns about the implementation of current policy changes surfaced a larger underlying issue about communication across agencies and with providers. The revised STARS requirements had implications for providers and agency stakeholder supports. The lack of resolution about the replacement of the South East Regional Key with the Early Learning Resource Centers and Professional Development Centers meant that agencies were in flux about the services they might continue to deliver and providers confused about where they could obtain those services. Providers who want to start a family child care business often do not know what is required and where to get accurate information nor do they have access to advice about whether opening a business is right for them. In addition, providers may not be aware of STARS or NAFCC accreditation requirements.

While several stakeholder agencies provide useful weekly newsletters and updates to providers, providers indicated that multiple newsletters can be confusing, and some providers don't read the updates. In addition, some providers are not technologically savvy and may not know how to find the newsletters if the newsletters go to the Promotions tabs on their email. Providers also agreed that while coaches are often a good source of information, their messaging may be inconsistent despite stakeholder agency efforts to convey the same information. In addition, agencies often rely on providers to contact them about changes, rather than reaching out to providers and following up with them. This situation is compounded if providers do not know who their coach is and how to find out about STARS help.

Conflicts in training dates when workshops are scheduled for the same date also represent challenges for providers who seek to attend.

"We are taking many more calls from providers who are confused and staff at CCIS are confused as well, so they often refer providers to SERK to interpret."
-Agency staff

"We're the last to find out about new and important information."
"Nobody is here to answer my questions."
-FCC providers

"We strive to coordinate, but we see this as an area for improvement."
-Agency staff

Strategies:

- **Develop a family child care-focused website that houses timely, accurate, and comprehensive information that helps providers navigate systems requirements.** This website would have updated information on “what’s coming down the pipeline” including regulatory changes, new STARS standards, training requirements, and other policy changes. This resource would translate regulations and quality standards into accessible language for family child care providers in one centralized location.
- **Provide a coordinated central calendar for information about training activities, informational meetings, and family child care-relevant activities to facilitate provider access and participation.** In addition, trainings need to be scheduled at times that are convenient for providers during the evening and on the weekends, because providers cannot always pay for substitutes.
- **Consider using other non-traditional venues such as community centers and faith-based locations to distribute and communicate information to providers.** These settings may be friendlier and less threatening locations for family child care providers than agency or college locations.
- **Developing partnerships with community and public organizations could increase resources for family child care providers.** For example, family child care providers use public parks and recreation centers as well as libraries as part of their programming for young children. Yet park restrooms and recreation centers are often closed when family child care providers are open.

Townsquareil.org

Town Square is one example of a family child care-focused website in Illinois that could be adapted to meet the needs of Philadelphia family child care providers.

Objective 4: Provider Leaders as Partners

Supporting provider leadership was a central theme in the stakeholder meetings. For the participants, it meant that providers are at the table from the beginning to shape effective systems and services. The project operationalized this definition of leadership through provider participation in calls to plan meeting agendas, in panel presentations that voiced provider perspectives about needs and policy impacts, and in small group exercises about gaps in services. During the course of the year, the involvement of the provider leaders shifted the tone of the discussions from stakeholder agencies’ support *to* family child care providers to stakeholder agencies’ support *with* family child care providers. The shift was palpable in the provider leadership meetings that followed each stakeholder meeting. In October, the providers acknowledged the value of being included:

Providers drive the work, craft agendas, define priorities, and participate in final decisions.

“Previously agencies gave opinion about where they were in the pipeline for providers.... There was no provider voice in the meetings! This was pretentious. This current meeting was important to have the provider voice. Providers are needed to speak for the family child care community. “

-FCC provider

By January, the provider leaders felt that they were being recognized:

“They’re getting our perspective, not just what they think.”

“This time I looked at people in the room, last time I didn’t. I can see they are listening.”

“[In the past], we were step-children [of the system], regardless of our expertise or experience or education levels, we were always seen as a novice. For so many years there was no movement and no one listening. Fast forward to recent events. Things are starting to change.”

-FCC provider

The provider voices played a significant role in discussions about future directions for both policy and services. Provider Panel presentations at each meeting provided an opportunity for stakeholder agencies to hear directly from providers about helpful resources such as STARS specialists, technical assistance, and support from other providers. Increased contact between the providers and agency stakeholders opened up opportunities for providers to serve as voices for the family child care community in statewide and local policy discussions. The providers were invited to contribute to the recommendations for STARS re-visioning, to serve on the Mayor’s Regulatory Reform Commission Family Child Care Sub-committee, and in the Cost of Care project managed by First Up, formerly DVAEYC.

“There is more of a chance of [folks] listening to us if we’re a larger group because we have people standing behind us.”

-FCC provider

Strategies:

- **Provide opportunities for provider voices to be heard at every meeting where child care is on the agenda. Providers need opportunities to share their perspective, voice their needs, and make recommendations for policy and program changes.** In addition, opportunities for providers to voice their needs and concerns should be incorporated into agency services' planning and development.
- **Acknowledge and support emerging leaders.** As policy changes unfold, provider leaders need opportunities to raise specific concerns about system and regulatory changes as well as available and accessible resources that allow them to continue serving children and families. Opportunities for participation in these kinds of discussions, including local and state meetings, should be expanded.
- **Provide increasing support for informal provider-led groups.** The QIP is an active provider group with regularly scheduled monthly meetings, but informal provider groups also exist in the City including those organized by Latina providers as well as African providers in West and South Philadelphia. Strengthening these groups and enhancing their coordination with the QIP would increase opportunities for provider-to-provider peer support and provider advocacy.
- **Help formal provider-led groups obtain funding and grants to serve provider members.** Development of provider associations, cooperatives, and other types of groups that may obtain non-profit status could help providers obtain grants and gain access to external funding sources. Moreover, these formal groups have the potential to serve as a platform for provider advocacy efforts around issues such as increased subsidy rates.
- **Continue to engage external partners in building family child care leadership and ownership of resources and information.** The current collaboration between the QIP and ICA, an organization that supports worker-owned cooperatives and has a grant to work with family child care providers in Philadelphia, is an example of a provider-initiated leadership.

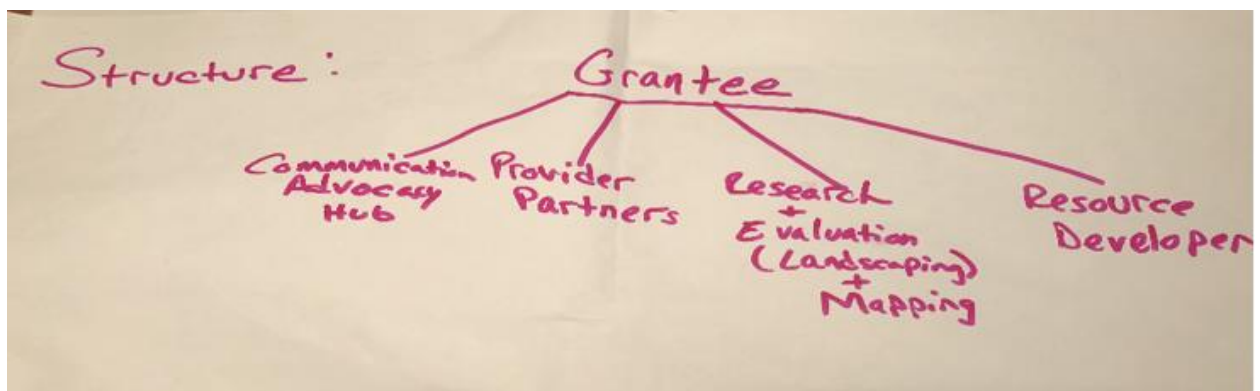
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Appendices

List of Stakeholder Organizations

- Public Health Management Corporation
- SERK/PHMC
- First Up (formerly Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children: DVAEYC)
- Philadelphia Freedom Valley YMCA Family Child Care Network
- Quality Influential Providers (QIP)
- 1199c Training Fund
- Child Care Information Services Northeast
- Parent-Child Home Program
- Public Citizens for Children and Youth
- Mayor's Office of Education
- City of Philadelphia Licensing and Inspection
- City of Philadelphia Commerce Department
- Philadelphia School District
- City of Philadelphia Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity
- Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL)
- Child Care Providers United
- William Penn Foundation
- AFSCME
- CCIS NE
- CCPU
- Early Care & Education Consulting
- Erikson Institute
- Family child care providers



Family Child Care Provider Leaders

The stakeholder agency group nominated six providers who had the potential to serve in a leadership role and would bring an important perspective to the project. Four providers accepted the invitation to participate. They included:

- Laverne Cheeseboro (biography below)
- Natalye Delegal (biography below)
- Latonta Godboldt (biography below)
- Johanna Jimenez (no biography submitted)

Latonta Godboldt, Small Wonders

My name is Latonta Godboldt. I am a mother of three children, a wife, and an actively engaged community member. It was my third-grade teacher who opened the door for me to embrace learning and want to become an educator. Her commitment and love for students was known throughout the entire school. Witnessing firsthand the impact a great teacher can make on students made me strive to become the educator I am today.

I am the owner and operator of Small Wonders FCCH, a STAR 4 PHLPrek program, located in Philadelphia. I have over 15 years of experience in early childhood education. My passion is educating others. I especially enjoy working with children; it brings me such delight to see their faces light up with excitement after conquering a previously challenging task. Present projects for Small Wonders FCCH include achieving national accreditation from the National Accreditation for Family Child Care and continuing to improve the quality of care we offer to the children and families we serve.

Over the years, I have served as an assistant teacher, group supervisor, lead teacher and a director. I am highly involved in the family child care provider union amongst other things, such as advocacy work for young children and the field of ECE. I serve as a family childcare provider council member for First Up, in efforts to help grow and shape the field with positive impacts and to bring voice to the novice provider. Other professional panels I have served on include, Running Start Philadelphia, STAR's Think Tank, and this Erikson project. In addition, I am currently serving as a steering committee member for the National Resource for Family Child Care.

I am committed to working in the field of ECE and stepping up to help implement the change that's needed to give voice, bring recognition and respect for all early childhood educational workers.

Natalye Delegal, Nat's Family Child Care

Mission Statement. Nat's Family Child Care's goal is to meet children where they are skill-wise and help each child reach challenging and achievable goals. My facility provides children with a safe, age-appropriate, and loving environment in an educationally and developmentally enhanced program. Nat's Family Child Care encourages parent involvement in support of the curriculum and in assisting the facility in enhancing child development.

Program Philosophy. Nat's Family Child Care promotes independence and education through interactive play using a variety of theories from well-known theorists. This promotes the whole child physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and creatively. Children develop respect for selves and others, while exploring, investigating and discovering their age-appropriate environment.

Laverne Cheeseboro, Heavenly Made Creations

Laverne Cheeseboro has always had a passion for empowering youth. In 2009, this South Philadelphia native was inspired to bring her vision to life. Cheeseboro, a devoted wife and mother of two sons, has poured every ounce of herself into developing the minds of future achievers. She continues to strengthen herself through personal and professional development and continued education in the field of Early Childhood Education.

Heavenly Made Creations is a Family Child Care program located in Southwest Philadelphia that serves children ranging in age from 3-months to five-years-old. What began as a family/neighbor provider in 2009 blossomed into a fully licensed institution of learning and development in 2013. It is the mission of Heavenly Made Creations to provide children with not only a safe environment in which to thrive, but also one that is small and intimate for full impact. Quality child care and safety brings peace of mind for parents. Since its inception, the vision has remained clear in terms of maintaining excellence, respect, professionalism, and integrity for families. Cheeseboro has succeeded by focusing on the physical, emotional, cognitive, and social development needs of the children in her program.

"High Quality" is a consistent theme for Heavenly Made Creations, and it can be seen by way of their ranking as a Keystone Star 4 Program, the highest star for quality that can be achieved in Pennsylvania. Cheeseboro also prides herself on developing partnerships between parents and her staff in order to achieve fantastic results for the children.

In 2015, Cheeseboro created a Facebook group to support Family and Group Early Childhood Educators located in Philadelphia. The group continues to grow offering direct support and resources. In 2017, Cheeseboro partnered with District 1199C to provide Early Childhood Education for the Mayor's PHLpreK program. This remarkable program has allowed parents to get their children prepared for Kindergarten at no cost. In addition to the obvious benefits for the future scholars in her daily care, the program has also created employment opportunities for those within the tight-knit community.