ACCN Website Is A Reality!

It has been a long time in coming, but we have finally launched a website for the Adventist Child Care Network! The ACCN site is hosted by the Pacific Union Conference Early Childhood Education and Care Division (http://paucearlychildhood.adventistfaith.org/) and offers practical information and tools for teachers and administrators working in Seventh-day Adventist early childhood programs.

Upon entering the website, visitors can browse the ACCN Archived Newsletters from 1999 onward.

Within the Administrators link, site supervisors will find helpful articles and documents specifically tailored to the operation of a Seventh-day Adventist early childhood education and care facility. Topics include finances, effective boards, risk management issues, material safety data sheets with many others being developed.

Infant Teachers will find daily care information forms, lesson plan ideas, portfolio development tips, developmental checklist forms and parent/teacher conference forms. Much more is being developed, so check back often to find additional resources.

Toddler Teachers will find weekly care information forms, lesson plan ideas, portfolio development tips, developmental checklist forms and parent/teacher conference forms. Some sections are still in the development stage and much more is coming, so check back often to find additional resources.

Preschool Teachers will find lesson plan ideas, portfolio development tips, developmental checklist forms and parent/teacher conference forms. Again, there are sections are still in the development stage and much more is coming, so check back often to find additional resources.

Pre-Kindergarten Teachers will find lesson plan ideas, portfolio development tips, developmental checklist forms and parent/teacher conference forms. Check the ACCN site often to find additional resources.

Articles and Texts hosts articles specific to early childhood education and care within the Seventh-day Adventist system. Currently there is an article titled “Mrs. White on Early Childhood”. Additional articles are still in the development stage and much more is coming – including a list of texts regarding the care and education of young children.

Members and Friends is the link which allows Seventh-day Adventist early childhood professionals to keep ACCN apprised of current contact information. This way, you will never miss an issue of the Adventist Child Care Connection newsletter or any other informational mailings.

Links of Interest provides helpful information on various early childhood issues such as:

- Teacher preparation programs in Seventh-day Adventist institutions
- Homeschooling information for the young child
- Seventh-day Adventist Curriculum and Instruction Resource Center Linking Educators (CIRCLE)
- Links to consolidated information on state licensing and regulatory statues
- Links to state early learning guidelines and standards
- An invitation to join ACCN on Facebook

Be sure to visit us on the web! We are looking forward to receiving your feedback and suggestions.

ACCN website address: paucearlychildhood.adventistfaith.org
As an example of some of the valuable information now available on the ACCN website, we have posted an excerpt from an article written for Administrators. To read the full article, be sure to visit the ACCN website at: http://paucearlychildhood.adventistfaith.org/

Making the Budget Work

Operating a private, non-profit, sectarian preschool is a very difficult endeavor. The successful director has a myriad of responsibilities that span everything from child development and curriculum, hiring and staffing issues to state and federal requirements, budgets and marketing. The amount of knowledge and expertise necessary is astounding.

Current concerns being voiced by directors of Adventist early childhood programs are a result of the economic upheaval many are facing. Families are facing job losses, changes in lifestyles and relocations. This affects the local preschool as clientele numbers decline, and relocations. This affects the local upheaval many are facing. Families are

Tuition Rates
First and foremost, set tuition rates on the high end of local market prices. There is no need to be the most expensive preschool in the area, but maintaining tuition rates that are on the low end of the market’s pricing sends a message. Try to

Annual Fees
Paperwork requires man-power; consumables cost money. Charge an annual registration and materials fee to help keep these costs under control.

Usage Agreement Rates
Throughout the year, enrollment rises and falls. All costs and expenditures follow suit, especially in the area of staffing. For the annual budget to remain stable, usage agreement rates (often called rent) must also. Usage agreement rates should be no more than 7% of the center's monthly income rather than a dollar amount. For clarification, the tax-exempt status of the Adventist church prohibits rental income; hence, the term "usage agreement".

Correlating Expenses with Income
Pay rates, salaries and annual raises must correlate with tuition increases and expense decreases. Define categories of employees and ensure each employee is categorized appropriately with the appropriate pay and benefit package.

Unexpected Closures
Every year, unexpected closures create additional financial hardships for early childhood centers. Build unexpected closures due to situations such as snow days and power outages into the annual budget and have a plan for how to cover the loss in tuition. The center’s board might consider adopting a policy regarding unexpected closures and whether or not tuition reimbursements will be considered.

Late Pick-up Fees
Twenty years ago, when a parent arrived after closing time, they paid a fee to the attending staff member who either pocketed the money or turned it over to the preschool, depending on the center’s policy. Today, wage and hour laws are stricter. Late pick-up fees must cover the hourly wage of the employee forced to stay at work after hours. This is especially true if the staff member incurs overtime. State wage and hour laws may require overtime pay even for partially worked hours – be sure to look into these issues!

Reconsider Discounts
If giving discounts, have a plan for how the money (lost through discounts) will be recuperated. Purposefully plan tuition recuperation efforts by developing a fund from a donor, organize annual fund raisers, marking up tuition prices just like the commercial market or other method. If given, discounts should be for employees of the early childhood center. Discounts to staff members of the local host site, be it a church, school or college/university, should not be given unless the host site has made arrangements for recuperating those discounts for the center. In addition, when it comes to discounts, stop dealing in percentages; deal in dollar amounts.

Multi-site Supervision
When more than one Adventist center is within close proximity, consider having one administrator who focuses on marketing, fund development, billing and collections. Let the assistant director(s) handle daily local issues such as staffing, meals and such. In that way, more than one center can benefit from excellent leadership, have one operating board, share teachers and substitutes, help cover expenditures, place bulk orders for consumables and build a stronger community presence.

Working with College Students
One idea to help the administrator and assistant director with daily duties is to create a position for an Early Childhood Education, Child Development or Education major to be a student worker supervisor. In addition to wages or a stipend, the student worker supervisor could be given administration course credits for their work. (Union College successfully instituted this concept. Contact the editor for more information and a sample job description.) Colleges and training programs are always looking for quality lab sites, so take advantage of this need to help benefit the center. What a wonderful idea to train up new center administrators!

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Starting on February 10, 2009, children’s toys and child care articles cannot contain more that 0.1% of six phthalates (DEHP, DBP, BBP, DINP, DIDP, and DnOP) regardless of when they were manufactured. The CPSC will abide by a court decision ruling that the prohibition on phthalates in the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 applies to products in inventory. Phthalates are a group of chemicals (oily, colorless liquids) that are used among other things to make vinyl and other plastics soft and flexible.

A “children’s toy” is defined in the statute as a product intended for a child 12 years of age or younger for use when playing. The Commission has previously stated that it will follow the definition of toy in the mandatory toy standard which exempts such things as bikes, playground equipment, musical instruments, and sporting goods (except for their toy counterparts).

The statute also prohibits phthalates over the limit in “child care articles,” which include products that a child, 3 and younger, would use for sleeping, feeding, sucking or teething. By way of example, a pacifier/teether would be an item that would help a child with sucking or teething; a sippy cup would facilitate feeding; and a crib mattress would facilitate sleeping.

Companies must meet their reporting obligation under federal law and immediately tell the Commission if they learn of a children’s toy or child care article that exceeds the new phthalates limits starting on February 10, 2009. Companies also should know that the CPSIA generally prohibits the export for sale of children’s products that exceed the new phthalates limits.

The agency will be issuing further guidance information next week. To find out more, call the CPSC Recall Hotline at (800) 638-2772.

With so many items now being made of plastic, this court ruling is very important for protecting the health of our young children. When it comes to plastics, “in with the new—out with the old” is a good motto to follow!

Marketing Tips

Early childhood administrators and teachers are fully aware that their clientele consists of two groups of people: those who pay and those who play! The parents make the decisions and pay the bills, however the children must be happy on an ongoing basis!

Parental impressions and input are very important. Resist the urge to be scared of an annual evaluation. Their critiques will make the program better; their ideas will help keep you in business. Besides, parents talk to each other, they know what is going on in their neighborhood and at other centers, and you can learn from them.

In short: know your competition and know your client’s needs.

Keeping in touch with your parents will help you to target your marketing message accordingly. This in turn will stretch your marketing dollars—even if you haven’t budgeted for them!

The Purposes of ACCN:

1. To affirm, encourage and empower all engaged in the weekday ministry to children. (On-going)
2. To provide opportunities for professional and spiritual growth. (On-going)
3. To provide networking opportunities for Seventh-day Adventist Child Development Centers. (On-going)
4. To set certification standards for child care providers. (In process)
5. To foster unity between all areas of child development within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (In process)
6. To encourage the incorporation of Early Childhood Education in the nurture and outreach programs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (In process)
7. To foster working relationships with the world church, unions, conferences, local churches, and schools. (In process)
8. To encourage surveys and research in the area of Child Development and Early Childhood Education in cooperation with the North American Division. (In process)
9. To counsel with the North American Division and General Conference in the development and review of programs and strategies for Child Development. (In process)
10. To provide guidance and resources to training organizations, colleges, and universities. (In process)
11. To advocate the hiring of Early Childhood specialists at all organizational levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. (In process)
12. To develop working relationships with other Early Childhood Education organizations. (On-going)
13. To encourage child care centers to obtain national accreditation. (In process)
Meal Service
Perform an annual cost analysis of the center’s hot meal service. Meal fees will need to be adjusted as costs dictate. To control or eliminate the cost of the center’s hot meal service for clientele, consider finding corporate meal sponsors in exchange for business promotion. Be aware that the government’s Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) requires a mountain of daily, monthly and annual paperwork and the audits are not worth the monies received.

Daily Census and Ratios
Keep an accurate account of the daily census and ratios. Keep the census as close to full as possible and know how to calculate full time equivalency numbers – the center’s budget lives and dies by this. (For help learning how to calculate full time equivalency numbers visit the ACCN website.) Keep the ratios tight with staggered staffing.

When hiring, be sure potential employees know that they are being hired to work for the center, not for a specific age group. Also, train new employees in every aspect, including the kitchen and custodial duties. Shuffle staff between classrooms when necessary based on the daily census and ratios.

Bad and Doubtful Debt
As difficult as it is, discontinue services for clientele who are behind in payments; or, help them find a temporary sponsor. For those who withdraw with a balance due, find and use a collection agency. In an effort to defer a drain on the center, build in bad and doubtful debts when putting together the annual budget.

Professional Development
As a means of self preservation, be sure to build into the annual budget and calendar the time and money for professional development of all staff members. The administrator especially needs to be aware of new trends in early childhood. Networking with other professionals provides valuable opportunities for gleaning tips on program management, staffing issues and business acumen.

Ideas for Raising Money and Diverting Costs... visit the ACCN website!
http://paucearlychildhood.adventistfaith.org/

Local Library:
Week of the Young Child

As you make plans to celebrate Week of the Young Child, April 19-25, 2009, your local library invites you to team up to highlight the importance of these early years. The Liaisons with National Organizations Serving Youth and Children committee of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) encourage you to reach out to the library in your community by offering to provide child-created art work for display during April, 2009.

• Talk with the librarian about available space - bulletin boards, blank walls, shelf-ends.
• Start collecting work that exemplifies child-directed creations (no color-sheets or crafts from patterns); maybe children’s impressions after hearing a favorite story.
• Highlight the art by backing each piece with colored construction paper.
• Work with the librarian to prepare a letter to send home with children inviting parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles to the library through the month of April.

Don't forget to suggest that this is a great photo-opportunity. Your librarian can submit newsworthy pictures to Linda Mays at lmays@ala.org and Kimberly Steimel at ksteimel@naeyc.org for possible use on ALSC and NAEC web pages (a photo-release form will be sent to you).

In addition to showcasing children’s creations, this project provides a terrific opportunity to encourage families of children in your care to be library users—and readers!