

Shaping Bright Futures

Finding affordable, high-quality childcare is a daily struggle for working families in the Monadnock Region. Long waitlists and staffing shortages in early childhood programs can create challenges for parents. Monadnock United Way (MUW) and Keene State College (KSC) are leading the Child Care Expansion Task Force in the federally funded* Child Care Expansion (CCE) project, designed to create a thriving local environment for children, staff, and families.



Teacher leading a Pyramid Model session on friendships

“To support the early learning necessary for the future of our children, we need a robust childcare system,” explains Liz LaRose, MUW’s president. The initiative offers several options to engage new early childhood professionals and enhance the skills of existing educators.

“When teachers have opportunities for professional development, they are more invested in their work with children and families. The grant activities have provided multiple pathways for extended learning and collaboration,”

notes Deirdre McPartlin, Director at Keene State College Child Development Center and co-director of the project.

One standout option is the **Childhood Development Associate (CDA)** credential, a nationally recognized certification demonstrating mastery in nurturing children’s emotional, physical, intellectual, and social growth. It’s often the first step toward a career in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and allows certified teachers to work independently in classrooms.

“Once a teacher is certified, it opens up opportunities for programs to expand, sometimes even enabling new

Elevating Educators and Supporting Families

classrooms,” LaRose notes. Over the past year, nearly 30 individuals have embarked on the journey to earn their CDA, creating a ripple effect of enthusiasm among their peers. LaRose adds, “When someone earns their CDA, they inspire others to pursue it, too. It’s caught on like wildfire.”

Another option is the **Early Childhood Education Certificate**, a fast-track option providing essential skills for working with children from birth to age eight in various roles, from daycare teachers to support staff. This certificate serves as a foundation for further education, as well.

The CCE project also offers specialized training like the **Pyramid Model**, which focuses on supporting children’s social and emotional development, especially those with challenging behavior. This model enhances the quality of care, improving outcomes for both children and families.

In addition, local educators participated in a year-long **community of practice**, complete with small-group coaching, to learn how to incorporate nature-based learning experiences. This immersive training equipped educators with creative tools to engage children with the natural world, fostering hands-on learning. Sara Ladzinski, a participant, described the experience as a window into learning how to make her space better and more inviting to parents and children.

The grant also supported **family-based childcare centers** by offering guidance for educators to become credentialed under the NH Early Childhood Professional Development System.

“It really all starts with the staff,” says LaRose.

“The CCE project ensures that teachers are not only qualified but passionate about their work, which directly benefits the children.”

The results of this initiative are already making waves. More qualified teachers mean shorter waitlists and higher-quality care. “Parents will build better relationships with confident, consistent educators, knowing their children are in good hands,” LaRose says. With these innovative solutions in place, the

Monadnock Region is poised to not only support its teachers but also give children the early learning foundation they need to soar toward future success.



Early learning professionals listening to a Pyramid Model presentation

The Monadnock Child Care Expansion Task Force is a collaborative group of invested community members and stakeholders seeking to close the child care supply and demand gap by finding creative solutions to issues of: affordability, accessibility, and high quality early care and education.

- Keene State College – Co-Lead
- Monadnock United Way – Co-Lead
- Impact Monadnock
- Cheshire Children’s Museum
- Keene Day Care Center
- Monadnock Community Early Learning Center
- Rise for baby and family
- The Children’s Learning Center
- The Keene Family YMCA
- The Winchester Learning Center



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



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