



The CDA® Credential Provides High School Students a Career and Higher Education Pathway

COUNCIL
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White Paper

For four decades, the Child Development Associate® (CDA) competencies have remained the most frequently accessed standard for entry level educators. The CDA® has shaped the development of state and federal competency frameworks that are designed to align professional development systems and career pathways for early childhood educators (ECE).ⁱ In the context of its historic commitment to building the competency of the early care and education workforce, since 2011 the Council has been working with various high schools throughout the United States that provide CDA® training as part of their curriculum in career and technical high schools (CTE).

The high school-based CDA® curriculum is designed to provide students with the same academic and hands-on training needed to prepare any professional for early childhood education and care settings. This approach also delivers the experience and academic training needed to meet the Council's strict requirements to successfully submit a CDA® application, pass a proctored exam, and succeed through an on-site verification visitⁱⁱ.

The CDA® standardized training requirements are an industry leading quality assurance measure to ensure consistency in performance.

These CTE high school CDA® candidates are required to meet all of the qualifications of other CDA® candidates, including 120 hours of education, 480 hours of work experience, a professional portfolio and family questionnaire, direct observation by a Council-contracted Professional Development Specialist, and a comprehensive examination.

Almost 3.5 million students graduate from high school every yearⁱⁱⁱ. Of those not attending college, more than one-quarter (29%) are unemployed and their job prospects are far from ideal^{iv}. Obtaining the CDA[®] Credential provides many of these students a path to employment and career development. In addition, the CDA[®] Credential addresses the shortage of emergent professionals trained to work with young children. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that there are 14 million young children who need early education and care.

Within three years of initiating the high school CTE CDA[®] program, the Council surveyed this group^v. In that early study it was found that the high school faculties were capable of supporting the students; that 95% of students were satisfied with their CDA[®] training; that 60 percent were employed in work with young children; and most were enrolled in college. How are these students faring at the five year mark?

In 2016, the Council received feedback from 131 of 667 CDA[®] holders who completed the credential while still in high school to obtain their thoughts about the program^{vi}.

Three Key Questions Were Asked

1. Are high school graduates with CTE CDA[®] training and who earn a CDA[®] Credential job-ready?
2. Does having a CDA[®] Credential encourage high school students to pursue higher education credits?
3. What is their employment status; are they working in the early childhood field?

Most Pursued CDA[®] to Prepare for Childcare Work

- 81% completed the CDA[®] Credential because they wanted to work with children
- 95% agreed that the CDA[®] prepared them to work with children

CDA[®] Credential Encouraged the Pursuit of Higher Education

- 84% said CDA[®] training encouraged them to begin or complete college
 - 25% earned college credits because of their CDA[®]
 - 47% enrolled in college
 - 12% completed an AA or more
- 64 of the 131 high school graduates had not completed a college degree
- 41 were enrolled in early childhood education or child development program in a two or four year college
- 20 of 29 (69%) of those who have completed some college are enrolled in classes in these programs
- Of those who have completed an AA, 6 of 16 (38%) majored in early childhood education
- Of those with a Bachelor's or more, 1 of 7 (14%) majored in early childhood education

The CDA[®] Credential Helps Job Seekers Find Employment

- 88% of those seeking employment post-high school (84 out of 96 looking for a job) said the credential helped them find a job.
- Of the 19 respondents who said they are currently enrolled in college:

- o 10 are also working
 - 4 full-time with children
 - 6 part-time with children (directly or indirectly)
- Of the 83 respondents who said they are working full- or part-time:
 - o 66 are working with children directly or indirectly
 - 58 of this group are working in a child care center or pre-school
 - 4 in Head Start
 - 4 in a family child care home

Summary

Ultimately, evidence is mounting that the CDA® credential is a best first-step toward ensuring that children are receiving high quality care from younger early childhood professionals graduating from high school CTE programs. The CDA® continues to be an important job- and college-ready asset for high school students interested in a career in early care and education profession. ■

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- i Washington, V., & King, B. N. (2017). Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential: A Competency-Based Framework for Workforce Development. In K. Rasmussen, P. Northrup, & R. Colson (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Competency-Based Education in University Settings* (pp. 284-307). Hershey, PA: IGI Global. doi:10.4018/978-1-5225-0932-5.ch015
 - ii Council for Professional Recognition. *The Child Development Associate® National Credentialing Program and CDA Competency Standards*. Washington, D.C., 2013.p. 1.
 - iii Source: National Center for Education Statistics. See http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_219.10.asp
 - iv Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics. See http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2015/data-on-display/dod_q4.htm
 - v Washington, Valora, Ph.D. *CDA and Career and Technical High Schools as an Effective Entry into Early Care and Education*. Council for Professional Recognition. Washington, D.C., 2015.
 - vi Data cited is from a survey conducted by the Council for Professional Recognition created a list of 667 high school graduates who obtained a CDA between 2011 and 2016. 618 were reached for a survey conducted between July and August 2016. Of them 131 responded to the survey for a response rate of 21% and margin of error of 7.7%.



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