

A woman with curly hair, wearing a green top and blue jeans, is sitting on a wooden floor and reading a colorful book to a young child. The child is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and denim shorts, and is looking up at the woman with a joyful expression. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

STATE OF THE  
Council *for*  
Professional  
Recognition  
2021

COUNCIL  
*for*  
PROFESSIONAL  
RECOGNITION

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# Reflecting on Achievement

2021 IN REVIEW

*Dr. Calvin E. Moore, Jr.  
CEO, Council for Professional Recognition*

## Reflection & Recovery

Supporting early educators is at the core of all we do, and 2021 was no different. There is no denying that last year remained challenging for our early educators. With our youngest learners ineligible for vaccines, continuing staff shortages, and the future of the Build Back Better Plan still under consideration by congress, our mission to support early educators was magnified and drove us to make sure we were supporting our ECE educators any way we could.

People are weary as we continue to go through waves of uncertainty with the pandemic. But this year has offered us something. It has offered us time to reflect. It has offered us a chance to rebuild, reimagine, and slowly recover. The world is beginning to heal, and I am beyond proud of how the Council achieved significant initiatives throughout the year. Through the resiliency of our team, we've worked together to overcome the direst days of the pandemic and now can look forward to building on our position as a leader in the credentialing of early childhood educators across the country.

Last year, I was deeply honored to be placed as CEO of the Council. All of the success we saw in 2021 is a testament to the great work of the teams across the organization during this continued unprecedented time. In addition, the ability for the Council to go 100% remote and keep our systems and the level of the credentialing stable speaks volumes about the talented team we have in place. I am proud of everyone and remain more hopeful than ever about the future of the Council.

## Focus on Equity

Nearly 1 million early childhood educators have earned a CDA® over its 46-year history, and to honor the diverse workforce across early education, we started the year with a focus on equity. We know it's essential that every part of our system centers around equity and identifies actionable ways to address it.

We want every aspect of our credentialing process to reflect the diversity in the field and give educators the tools to ensure their students are successful and improve the learning conditions of young children of color and other children from historically marginalized communities. In February, the Council partnered with the Children's Equity Project to focus on increasing the knowledge, awareness, and understanding of early educators on issues of equity, bias and systemic racism.

In addition, our conference this year will explore the theme of Leading Career Pathways to Equity by taking an in-depth look at building systems, policies, and career pathways to place our industry on the path towards equity in the classroom and the workplace.



In 2021, we released the “Child Development Associate® (CDA) Handbook for High School: A Guide to Advocacy and Implementation.” The Handbook will help more high school students earn their CDA and helps administrators and educators launch and sustain high school early childhood education training. High school students who earn their CDA gain experience that prepares them to enter early childhood education with confidence in their knowledge of children’s cognitive, social and emotional development.

## Reimagine the Future

I call our early educators superheroes because of their tireless work to provide our youngest learners with the best start in life. That’s why the Council for Professional Recognition is supercharging our credentialing process with the Reimagining Initiative. We began this initiative in 2021 and will continue to work through its various phases in 2022. The result will be strengthened systems and processes to serve candidates better. Our commitment to innovation and the design thinking approach ensures we keep candidates at the heart of every decision we make. This cross-collaboration effort to enhance the CDA® process is a primary way to achieve the aspiration of increased access to the CDA credential to educators worldwide.

## New Website & Successful Conference

The Council launched its website with a new design to provide a modern and seamless experience to the growing number of candidates seeking to earn a CDA®. The Council spent the last eight months gathering feedback from various stakeholder groups, including current and prospective CDAs, with the goal of providing an intuitive, user-friendly experience. The new website will allow new and existing members of the community a streamlined experience.

In October we convened national and international leaders, policymakers, early childhood professionals, higher education institutions and early childhood training organizations for another sold out 2021 Early Educators Leadership Conference (EELC).

After the conference was postponed in 2020 due to COVID-19, the Council for Professional Recognition’s leadership approached 2021 with a new vision and focus on Shaping the Future: A Time for Resilience, Renewal, and Reform. The conference design focused not only on the needs of the early childhood education field at large, but also the individual. The health and wellness focus offered attendees a holistic approach to their total well-being and self-care.

## Organizational Growth

And finally, we continued to hire new staff and even went through an organizational reorganization to ensure internal stability and quality for work output. We also added three new board members in Q4. Each of them brings unique perspectives to the Council’s board of directors and we are thrilled to have them join our Governing Board. I am sure their professional experiences will benefit the board as they work to advance the Council’s mission and vision for the early care and education sector.

Keeping our core mission in mind, throughout this report, you will hear directly from educators who received their CDA®. The day-to-day of the Council’s work has a direct effect on the success of ECE educators and our youngest learners and what better way to put our educators first, than to showcase them throughout this report.

I wish you a safe and healthy 2022 and remain highly optimistic about the road ahead due to the exceptional minds throughout the Council.



Dr. Calvin Moore, Jr.  
CEO of the Council for Professional Recognition

# Mission

## OF THE COUNCIL

The Council for Professional Recognition promotes improved performance and recognition of professionals in the care and education of children from birth to age five.

# Vision

## OF THE COUNCIL

The Council works to ensure that all early childhood educators can meet the developmental, emotional and cognitive needs of the nation’s youngest children.

# Advancing early childhood educators' *professional growth, development and recognition.*



## Role

### OF THE COUNCIL

The Council's key purpose has long been to assess the knowledge and skills of professionals in the early childhood care and education field. Since 1985, we have awarded the Child Development Associate® (CDA) credential to candidates who can meet the CDA® Competency Standards, a proven measure of performance in ECE.

The CDA is our hallmark product and a first step on the pathway to a rewarding career. Still, the need to grow and learn never ends. So, we have broadened the scope of our work beyond assessing candidates for the CDA. We now also offer a wide range of resources and research, seminars and events on trending topics in the ECE field. We support early childhood educators so they can do even more to support our youngest children.

## History of the CDA®

C R E D E N T I A L

The CDA® came out of the civil rights movement and search for justice in all walks of life. In 1971, a common commitment to equity in education brought a group of progressive early childhood leaders together. They wanted to raise the level of early childhood education and make sure that all our country's young learners had qualified educators who could do more than babysit infants.

The meetings of these progressive thinkers led to the concept of a professional credential, and in 1975, Margaret E. Wright was awarded the first CDA. With federal funding, the CDA Consortium and then Bank Street College administered the CDA. Over the next decade, the demand for the CDA grew so much that the Department of Health and Human Services worked with the National Association for the Education of Young Children to set up a separate nonprofit charged with overseeing the credential.

Since then, the Council for Professional Recognition has ramped up the CDA to meet society's changing demands. We've added more coursework and adapted it to be inclusive by filling the needs of diverse cultures and new immigrant groups.

Much has changed since that group of early childhood leaders met in 1971. But one thing has stayed the same in the ongoing quest to increase the ranks of qualified early childhood educators in every continent, country and county. The core of the CDA has remained the conviction that all young children have a basic right to equity in education.

According to  
CDA® recipients, earning  
the CDA not only helps  
educators bring out the best  
in children, it also *advances*  
*their careers* and contributes  
to the status of our  
profession.



# 2021 Accomplishment

## H I G H L I G H T S

### Connecting with the Council Just Got Easier: Say Hello to the New Online Experience

In June of 2021, the Council unveiled a redesigned public website. The project started with eight months of gathering feedback from various stakeholder groups, including current and prospective CDAs®, with the goal of providing an intuitive, user-friendly experience. The website provides a modern and seamless experience to anyone who comes to the website.

The new website features include:

- Contemporary look and feel with easy-to-use functionality
- Self-identified pathways for the user (e.g., educators, parents)
- Entire site available in Spanish
- In-depth search options

### Annual Conference

The annual Early Educators Leadership Conference (EELC) was held in Lansdowne, VA, in October 2021. The event was the highlight of the year and brought together educators from around the nation to hear the latest trends and topics the sector is facing. The conference was a sold-out, hybrid event with an in-person and virtual element to accommodate the demand and support of our educators as they reconnected and engaged with the latest trending topics. The conference design focused not only on the needs of the early childhood education field at large, but also the individual. Professional development, networking and wellness are recurring key components at every EELC conference. The health and wellness program offered attendees a holistic approach to their total well-being and self-care.

2021 EELC Highlights:

- More than 200 registrants (sold out event)
- 20+ professional development sessions
- Networking opportunities and special events
- 30+ keynote speakers and presenters and 17 sponsors

### New Learning Management System

The Council completed a successful launch of a new learning management system (LMS). This effort replaced a legacy system and streamlined the training and onboarding processes for all Council

stakeholders. This change contributed to enrolling over 3,200 individuals in training across nine different courses (PD Specialist Refresher, Initial and Intensive trainings in English and Spanish, Home Visitor training in English and Spanish and PD Specialist CDA Virtual Verification Visit™ training). Additionally, over 2,600 individuals have completed training across the courses.

### CDA Virtual Verification™ Accommodations

To make sure verification remained accessible during the ongoing pandemic, the Council designed and implemented a virtual verification accommodation pilot to provide an alternative option to CDA® candidates in the process of completing the credentialing process. More than 8K candidates were invited to participate in the virtual verification visit pilot. The pilot was initiated to increase accessibility and provide an alternative option to CDA candidates attempting to complete the credentialing process. A total of 334 candidates were assigned to the virtual verification visit process, and 255 CDA credentials were awarded. Candidates are continuing to complete the virtual verification process.

### White Glove Customer Service Initiative

In 2021, the Council launched a new customer experience initiative designed to enhance the level of customer service offered by Council staff and customer support center agents. As a part of the White Glove Customer Service initiative, all Council employees and customer support center agents received customer service training from national experts. Additionally, the customer support center agents received 245 hours of additional training. To ensure that the Council is available to its stakeholders when they need us, the hours at the customer support center were expanded and the number of agents increased.

“The CDA® plays a big part in our curriculum and approach because it’s very hands-on. It gives students the practical skills to stand in front of a group of children and help them be their best.”

—Phillip White, president, Theoria Technical College, Carlsbad, CA



### Reimagining the CDA® Process

In response to the challenges faced by the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Reimagining the CDA® Process project launched in the summer of 2021 with the following goals:

- To ensure equity in the credentialing process across all dimensions by returning to a candidate-centric, community driven process.
- To ensure that everyone engaged in the credentialing process consistently experiences exceptional service.
- To ensure an efficient, innovative credentialing process by using all available technology.

Using a design thinking approach, the Council and its consultant, BCT Partners, conducted a thorough analysis of the Council’s credentialing management system and received feedback on the credentialing process from over 5,000 CDA stakeholders, including current and former candidates, PD Specialists, ECE representatives at colleges and universities, government officials, training organizations, and ECE policy experts. During the next phase of the Reimagining project, the Council team will explore enhancements and improvements to the credentialing process identified during 2021.

### Job Analysis Study

To further our commitment to excellence for Early Care Professionals, the Research team contracted with Alpine Testing Solutions, Inc. (Alpine) to facilitate a job analysis study for three of the Council’s CDA® examinations: Infant-Toddler, Preschool, and Family Child Care. The Job Analysis took a critical look at the competency indicators and examples, made changes and additions where appropriate, and finally drafted an exam blueprint. The Council solicited participants from the field, ultimately vetting and engaging 12 subject matter experts (SMEs) through several virtual workshops between October and December 2021. These SMEs provided invaluable field expertise to the Council and Alpine that was then confirmed in a validation survey sent to 118,000 CDA certificants. The Council will use these findings to update the CDA multiple choice exam and other educational materials.

“The CDA® is a strong first step for high school students into the world of early education. I like it because it’s hands-on and requires students to put together a portfolio, as well as gain a certain number of hours of experience. By doing so the students can see the reality of the ECE field and decide if they’re really equipped to handle the work it requires.”

—Misti Norman, executive director, Heavenly Kids Learning Center, Columbus, OH

“The CDA® helps candidates think about what they are doing and exposes them to the key theories of early childhood practice. It also makes them see the major impact that early learning makes on the rest of people’s lives.”

—Gina Pope, coordinator and developmental specialist,  
Tanana Chiefs Conference Infant Learning Program, Fairbanks, AK



*Gina Pope travels great distances by small plane, boat and snowmobile to serve a rural region of Alaska that’s about 400 by 600 square miles. Pope and her team serve Alaskan Native families with children under three with diagnosed medical conditions or marked developmental delays. The children are provided with occupational therapy, physical therapy and psychological services. Pope also works with parents on finding the best ways to help their children advance and grow.*

# 2021 Achievements

S N A P S H O T

Over 800,000  
educators credentialed since 1976



Over 45,000  
educators credentialed  
in 2021 amidst a global  
pandemic.

**Online CDA Initial 18,306**

Preschool	9,685
Infant-Toddler	7,470
Family Child Care	1,023
Home Visitor	128

**CDA Renewal 19,232**

**Renewal Amnesty 7,804**

2,415,279  
Unique Website Pageviews



15K  
fans

<b>ENGAGEMENTS</b>	<b>14K</b>
Reactions	10K
Comments	2.2K
Shares	1.3K

**POSTS 565**

**POST CLICKS 8.7K**



4.8K  
followers

<b>ENGAGEMENTS</b>	<b>2.1K</b>
Likes	1.5K
Retweets	508K
Replies	82
Quote Tweets	38

**TWEETS 716**

**TRAFFIC 9.3K**



6K  
followers

<b>ENGAGEMENTS</b>	<b>6.5K</b>
Reactions	5.5K
Comments	569
Shares	426

**POSTS 536**

**POST CLICKS 7.2K**

Council for Professional Recognition received  
**over 400 mentions** in media outlets globally.





18,403

CDA Verification Visits® Completed



1.8M

email campaign opens



300+

pieces translated in Spanish

INFINITE REASONS TO CELEBRATE



4.86

approval rating for the 2021 Early Educators Leadership Conference



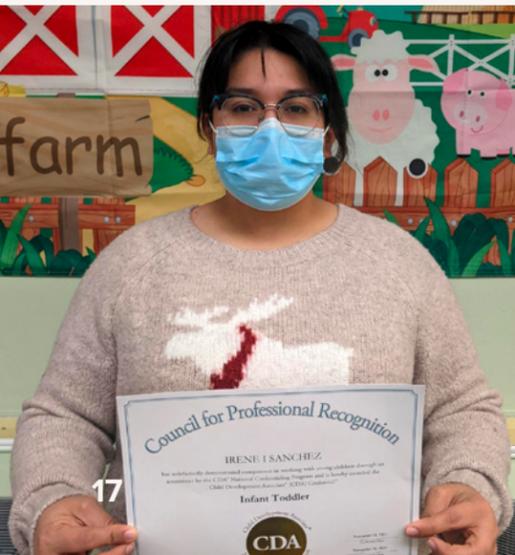
2,300+

subscribers to the new CDA® Handbook for High School



1145

vouchers issued in partnership with the MD State Dept of Education



Launched

new, streamlined Council website with a focus on user pathways



Over 2K

engagements received for new CouncilLIVE video series on social



1,000

new CDA PD Specialists™ endorsed



“I encourage teachers to earn a CDA®. What I value about the credential is the way it connects the coursework to the practicum, so you implement what you learn.”

—Hwaida Hassanein, owner and senior training and development specialist, H&H Child Care Training Center, Gaithersburg, MD

## CDA® Testimonials

FROM THE FIELD

“Getting a CDA® is a great way for providers to enhance their professional growth. I know that getting my own CDA increased my skills and helped me succeed in my career.”

—Crystal Barksdale, owner, Ms. Crystal’s Little Rugrats, Randallstown, MD

“The CDA® helps you understand new concepts, take new approaches to child care, learn how to communicate better with children. And that makes the CDA an industry standard. I wanted to have it for myself because it’s a way to show parents that I’m a quality provider who can offer the best of care for their youngsters.”

—Nicole Bastfield, owner, Happy Sprouts Family Child Care, Baltimore, MD

“The CDA® has really made me delve into ECE theories so I can decide how to use them in my practice. The CDA not only made me think about how I can support the children better but also about how I can do more to support my staff. I’m a much better-informed educator because of having earned it.”

—Janna Rodriguez, owner, Innovative Daycare, Corp., Freeport, NY

“The CDA® made me understand what was expected of me as an ECE professional. Without it, I don’t think I would be as far along as I am in my career.”

—Jerry Graham, owner and chief coach, Choices Early Learning Consulting, Hampton, VA

“The CDA® gave me the practical skills I needed to work with children. It taught me how to set up a classroom environment, keep children safe and be sensitive to different cultures. The CDA is the best, first step for people who want to go into the early childhood field.”

—Lakeisha McClendon, teacher, Head Start, Atlanta, GA

“The CDA® is the baseline for a lot of our positions, especially our Early Head Start positions. It was the first credential I ever earned, and I’m still proud of getting it though I completed my doctoral studies in 2010.”

—Dr. Rory Sipp, senior vice president, Acelero Learning, Las Vegas, NV

“When I earned my CDA®, I was so excited. It gave me such pride and such a sense of achievement to know that I was a qualified teacher.”

—Tameka Donaldson, director, KinderCare Learning Center, Grove City, OH

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“The CDA<sup>®</sup> made me a better teacher by helping me understand why I was doing things a certain way instead of just winging it. It has also made me want to go on in school and earn my BA so I can be a lead teacher.”

—Cedric Bell, assistant teacher,  
Acelero Learning, Las Vegas, NV

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