

Small But Mighty: A Gift for Family Child Care

It was Saturday morning at Child Care Resources, and the room was already moving.

Twenty family child care educators had given up part of their weekend to join us in launching Curriculum Matters in Family Child Care. We started with introductions (and some dance moves) and quickly discovered something remarkable: together, the educators in the room represented more than 500 years of experience caring for and teaching young children.

Five hundred years.

There was plenty of laughter in the room that morning. There was also a lot to celebrate.

Family child care educators have been a small but mighty part of our child care community for decades. They welcome children into their homes, caring for small groups in close-knit settings where learning and relationships grow side by side. And when the pandemic disrupted nearly every part of daily life, family child care remained among the most reliably available forms of care for families who still needed somewhere safe for their children to go.

Over the years, these educators have also told us what they need. More funding. More support for children with challenging behaviors and special needs. And access to curriculum — an important resource that can be especially expensive for the smallest child care businesses serving the fewest children.

We listened. As CCRI begins its 45th year of service, we're giving back to the child care community that has grown with us, and the first gift is for family child care.

Using private endowment funds, CCRI purchased *The Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care* for 45 family child care homes and centers in a residence. Each participating educator will receive a curriculum kit — but that's only the beginning. CCRI will spend the next year partnering with these educators, beginning with introductory curriculum training, continuing with individual coaching on curriculum implementation and fidelity, and ending with specific support for guiding children's behavior. It's an investment not simply in materials, but in the people who will put those materials to work every day.

And that Saturday morning, the first 20 participants, all of whom had previously participated in an Intro to Creative Curriculum training, got to do something fun: open the boxes. The unboxing was part discovery, part celebration, and perhaps the perfect way to begin a year of learning together. These weren't simply boxes of new materials. They were tools being placed in the hands of educators who collectively had already spent centuries doing this work.

Forty-five years of CCRI. Forty-five family child care educators. More than 500 years of experience in the first room alone.

Small but mighty, indeed.