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DWD: Celebrates early childhood educator apprentices with apprenticeship contract signing in honor of Registered Apprenticeship Week

Posted on Thursday, Nov 18, 2021

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Milwaukee – The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek and Employ Milwaukee President and CEO Chytania Brown celebrated Registered Apprenticeship Week, proclaimed by Gov. Evers for the week of Nov. 15 – 21, 2021, by touring Next Door, an early childhood education center in Milwaukee. They also honored a new apprentice entering the early childhood education field with a contract signing.

“High-quality, accessible childcare is, unfortunately, not available to many Wisconsinites and it’s become a huge barrier to employment for many parents,” DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek said. “That is why it’s incredibly important to develop new apprenticeship pathways into the early childhood education profession as it addresses two critical points: (1) helps with the issue of childcare accessibility in Wisconsin and (2) opens up new career pathways for people who want to enter the childcare field with an ‘earn while you learn’ apprenticeship model.”

DWD’s Early Childhood Educator apprenticeship program allows its apprentices to earn wages while learning industry skills. Interest in the Early Childhood Educator Registered Apprenticeship is growing around the state, with several programs under development, including in the Eau Claire/Western Wisconsin area.

The program is furthest along in Southeastern Wisconsin, where DWD partnered with Employ Milwaukee, the workforce development board in Milwaukee County, to bring in the first cohort of Early Childcare Educator apprentices. The program is partially funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which is administered locally through Employ Milwaukee. The initial work to develop the program with local employers was supported by a Department of Labor Grant, the American Apprenticeship Initiative (AAI). The AAI grant focused on creating apprenticeships in nontraditional areas, like childcare.

“The Early Childhood Educator Registered Apprenticeship provides a core set of knowledge and skills to members of the early childhood workforce,” said Employ Milwaukee President and CEO Chytania Brown. “As Milwaukee-area families return to work, they have reliable and well prepared providers for their young children.”

Next Door Foundation is currently sponsoring the training of eight apprentices, with related instruction being provided by Milwaukee Area Technical College. The apprenticeship program provides apprentices the opportunity to earn wages while learning on-the-job skills and working towards a technical and/or associate degree in early childhood education.

“We are proud to host apprentices at Next Door,” Next Door Executive Director Tracey Sparrow said. “Not only is this helping us build our teacher pipeline in a time of extreme shortage, but it provides our teachers with opportunities to develop their careers and expand their skills and knowledge to do this important work.”

Early childcare educator apprentices work full time in a childcare setting as co-teachers and are mentored by experienced teachers. It’s a 4,000 hour-long (two-year) program that includes 432 hours of paid related instruction at Milwaukee Area Technical College.

For more information, visit the Wisconsin Apprenticeship website.