PERENNIAL PROBLEM:

What to do about Nurturing Human Development.

CONTINUING PARENTING CONCERN:

Promoting Healthy Parent-Child Relationships

RELATED CONCERN:

Childcare Issues.

DESIRED RESULTS FOR LEARNERS:

Students will understand the underlying issues which influence childcare decisions.

LEARNER OUTCOMES: Students will:

1. Become aware of the context involved in childcare decisions.
2. Examine the alternatives for childcare available to parents.
3. Consider the desired results of different choices of childcare for children and parents.
4. Analyze the consequences of action of children and parental roles when considering the various alternative forms of childcare.

SUPPORTING CONCEPTS:

A. Reasons Families Use Childcare

B. Challenges Arising in Childcare Situations

C.   Types of Childcare

D. Common Indicators of Quality Childcare

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

One of the most important decisions a parent makes is one of substitute childcare – who will care for the children during times the parent cannot.

The need for alternate care for young children remains strong due to the fact that many children live in families where the parents work away from home. Additionally, at-home parents may feel that their children can benefit from being with other children in a childcare setting. Childcare has become a service to families to provide custodial care, to stimulate learning experiences, to provide socialization opportunities, to enable parents to work, and to implement early childhood education principles (Berns, 2004) According to the 2002 Census, 62.9% of children under five were involved in some type of regular childcare arrangement.

Families have many choices in locating childcare since there are many types available. The three basic types of childcare are; (1) family childcare, provided in someone else's home, (2) in-home care, provided by a caregiver in the child's own home, and (3) center-based care.

 Family childcare providers offer care for children in the provider's home. Most states require family providers be regulated if they care for more than four children. Minimum standards for safety, nutrition, and health are set by all states and many require providers to have a criminal

records check, food handler permit, infant/child first aid and CPR certification, and additional annual training hours. Parents might choose family childcare providers because they desire a home-like environment for their children. They believe that it is easier to relate to a single caregiver and that a smaller group will help children feel more secure and comfortable. Family childcare providers may also be more readily available, less expensive, or more flexible.

In-home caregivers, generally referred to as nannies, provide care in the child's home. Nannies may live with the family and be provided with room, board, car, etc., or may "live out," providing their own residence. This type of care is fairly expensive and does not give the child an opportunity to play with other children. Since most states do not regulate this type of caregiving, it is important for parents to check credentials and references before the person is hired.

Childcare centers care for children in one or more groups. States require centers to be licensed and inspected at least once a year to ensure that health and safety standards are maintained. Some child care centers are businesses run for profit while others are nonprofit, sponsored by churches and other organizations. Some businesses offer childcare as a benefit to their employees. Parents may choose child care centers because they believe that larger groups with multiple caregivers and state inspections are safer and more dependable, and provide a better learning environment for their children.

The issue of "quality" childcare is forever on the minds of parents and society. Since the word "quality" is a somewhat subjective term, just what does quality childcare entail? Quality care requires (1) a caregiver who is warm and nurturing and understands how children grow and develop, (2) an environment that is safe, and (3) activities that help the child develop physically, socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Several studies have concluded that three factors are the most significant in predicting the most positive child outcomes: (1) the size of the overall group of children, (2) the caregiver-to-child ratio, and (3) the specialized training in child development and/or early childhood education of the caregiver. Later studies confirmed that children in childcare settings that had smaller groups with trained caregivers were more cooperative, more involved in tasks, more talkative, more creative, and had greater cognitive gains (Ghazvini & Mullis, 2002).

Cultural sensitivity is an issue in childcare due to the diverse nature of our society today. Children come into care with a set of values, beliefs and practices that are unique to their own family and ethnic culture. Childcare providers will also have their own set of beliefs based on their own culture. Culture is so deeply embedded into one's existence, that it is often difficult to recognize the role it plays in determining how children are cared for. The childcare environment that supports the home culture provides consistency in children's lives and sends a clear message about who they are.

Choosing quality childcare that fits the individual needs of families can take some time. Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) can provide referral information to families to help them make informed choices about child care in their community. It is essential that parents visit potential childcare providers before making a decision. Look around the facility. Is it warm and inviting? Consider space, safety, equipment, health standards, etc. In Oregon, family childcare providers caring for four or more children must be registered and child care centers must be certified. Ask about the qualifications and training of the caregivers, adult-to-child ratio and group size. Quality child care requires caregivers who understand how children grow and learn, who enjoy being with children and who communicate well with parents. As Fred Rogers said, "The caregivers in a child's early life will always be a part of who they are." It's important to choose carefully.

Experts recommend that parents stay involved in the program they have chosen for their children. Attending parent meetings, volunteering, and regular communication with the child's teacher can help provide the best care and education for the child.

Childcare issues are affected by public policy. In recent years much concern has been expressed about the impact of public issues and public policy decisions on families. Issues concerning child care availability, affordability, and options are examples of these issues. With the diversity represented in families, it is important that all families be represented in the policy making process if policies are to be of the greatest help to families and communities.

Teacher Preparation:

1. Think back on the experiences you have had in your (or your family's) search for childcare. What are some of the challenges you encountered? How did you feel about leaving your children with a caregiver? What choices did you have? How did your values affect your final decisions? What effects did the caregivers have on your children and your parental role?

2. Think of the students in your class. What kinds of childcare situations have they experienced? Are there any teen parents in the class? Look through the activities. Which ones would be most appropriate, considering the resources that are available in your community?

Note: TM in the activities refers to transparency master and SM refers to student master.

DIRECTED ACTIVITIES:

Supporting Concept A: Reasons Families Use Childcare

1. **"Childcare Experiences":** Project the Alan Estrada cartoon (TM-1) on a screen. Have students reflect on personal childcare experiences they had as young children.

   - What do you remember about being cared for by someone other than your parents? (Caregiver/babysitter spanking you, threatening or ridiculing you, sending you to bed without dinner, ignoring you while talking on the phone or watching television, etc.).
   - How did these experiences make you feel?
   - What were the circumstances that created the need for your parents to use childcare? What do you think were your parent underlying values in deciding on childcare?
   - How do you feel about parents working outside the home?
   - Is there a difference in your attitude if children are infants? Preschoolers? School-age children? Why?
   - Who do you think should be chosen as a caregiver? (Family members, relatives, trained childcare personnel, etc.)
     (Awareness of Context, Alternative Approaches, Desired Results)

2. **"Need for Childcare Services":** In small groups (2 to 3 each) have students conduct research regarding the factors which relate to the increased need for childcare services. Using the school computer lab, have students do their research online for the most recent information. Provide them with some key words or phrases, such as those below, to guide their research:

- Women, work and childcare
- Changes in women's labor force participation
- Working women and welfare reform
- Single parents
- Working mothers

Ask each group to take notes from their research on the topics listed below. When they have completed their research post five pieces of butcher paper around the room with the following topics at the top and have each group share the information they found.

REASONS FAMILIES REQUIRE CHILDCARE
HOW THE NEED HAS CHANGED OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS
POSSIBLE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF ALTERNATE CHILDCARE
SOME MAJOR SOCIAL ISSUES THAT EMERGE FOR THE COMMUNITY,
    STATE AND NATION
(Alternative Approaches, Consequences of Action)

Supporting Concept B: Challenges Arising in ChildCare Situations

3. **"Problems of Working Families":** In small groups, have students suggest solutions and possible consequences to the following problem situations arising in a family with:

    A. A single working mother or father. What can be done when:

    1) A child becomes ill?
    2) An in-family caregiver has to be gone for the day?
    3) An out-of-town death occurs in the child's family?

    B. Both parents working. What can be done when:

    1) A child becomes ill?
    2) The childcare center is closed for an emergency?
    3) The neighbor who drives children to school will be one hour late?

    C. A teenage mother attending high school. What can be done when:

    1) The grandmother or baby-sitter is sick?
    2) The car (used for taking the baby to grandmother's and to get to school) breaks down?
    (Alternative Approaches, Consequences of Action)

Supporting Concept C: Types of Childcare

4. **"Types of Childcare":** In small groups have students research the following topics and prepare a presentation to the class on their findings. They can prepare a handout for the class, compose a transparency with the most important information, or create some other type of visual to summarize their findings.

    A. Types of licensed childcare in Oregon with characteristics.
    (www.ChildCareInOregon.org)

    B. Childcare that does not require regulation in Oregon ("exempt")
    (www.ChildCareInOregon.org

C. Types of childcare with advantages and disadvantages for each.
(http://parenting.ivillage.com)
(www.childcareaware.org)
(www.childcareinfoline.org)
(www.healthychildcare.org/childcaretypes)

D. Oregon Standards for School Based Programs
Oregon Department of Education
(www.ode.state.or.us)
Office of Student Learning & Partnerships; Teen Parent Programs

E. What is the local Childcare Resource and Referral Agency; what does it do and how can parents use it to find childcare in their community.
(www.oregonchildcare.org/ccrr.htm)

F. Head Start; what is it and who does it serve?
(www.ode.state.or.us)
Office of Student Learning & Partnerships; Oregon Head Start PreK Programs

G. The Inclusive Childcare Program
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
(www.ocdd.org/inclusive_child_eng.htm)
(*Alternative Approaches, Consequences of Action, Desired Results*)

Supporting Concept D: Indicators of Quality Childcare

5. **"Parent Interviews":** Assign students to interview a parent of a young child who used or is using some type of child care. If appropriate in your community, have them include interviews with specific cultural groups such as Hispanic, Russian, Southeast Asian, Native American, or African-American. Include such questions as:

   - What type of childcare do you use?
   - What were the three most important considerations in making the choice?
   - What are the benefits for your children?
   - What are some problems that have occurred? How did you solve them?

   Lead a class discussion on the results of the interviews, comparing and contrasting the choices which might be apparent in different types of families.

   If there is a local Resource and Referral Agency in your community, invite a member of the staff to describe how he or she assists parents in finding the kind of childcare they need.

6. **"Choosing Quality Childcare":** In small groups have students brainstorm what they think they would look for if they were choosing an appropriate childcare setting for 1)an infant, 2) a toddler, 3) a preschool child, and 3) a school-age child. Have them list their qualities on a sheet of butcher paper.
   Prior to this activity the teacher should use the following online resources to obtain the latest information on selecting quality child care:

   www.childcareaware.org (5 Steps to Choosing Quality Child Care)
   www.brightfutures.org (Safe, Quality Child Care)

www.zerotothree.org (Choosing Quality Child Care)
www.nncc.org (Ingredients for Quality Child Care)
www.naccrra.org (Is This the Right Place for my Child?)

Have students share the results of their brainstorm activity. Then provide the students with handouts from one or more of the above resources for them to compare with the results of their brainstorm activity. Discuss the checklists found online. Include, as part of the discussion, how they could educate parents of young children on how to choose the right childcare setting for their child.

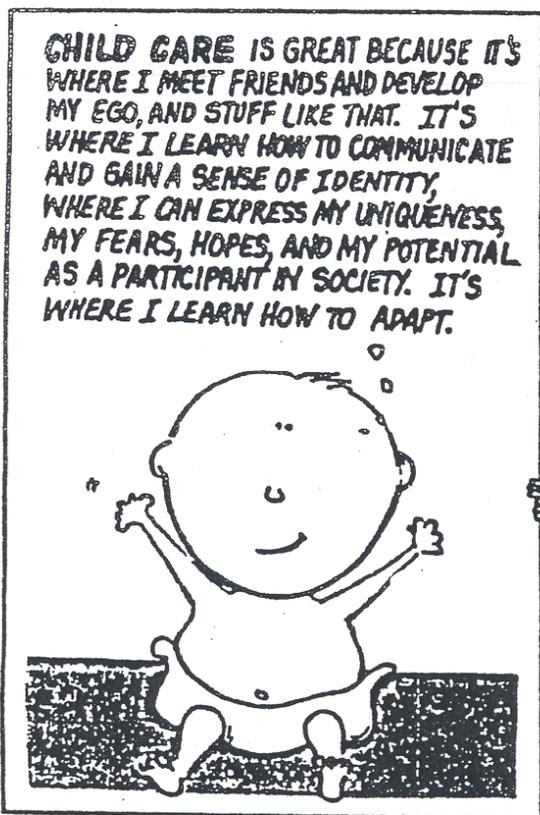(*Alternative Approaches, Consequences of Action, Desired Results*)

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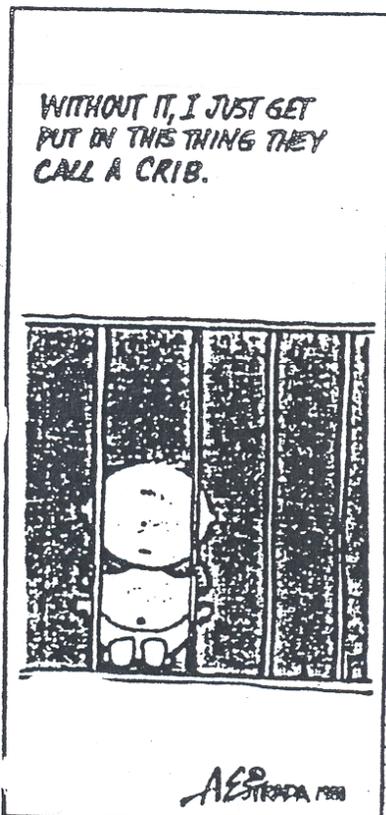
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