As I sat down to write this edition’s Director’s section, I began to reflect upon this issue’s topic of professionalism. All of us throw the word “professionalism” around as if we really know how it is defined and how we see ourselves defined by it. Researching the word “professionalism” gave me a bit of insight on how to frame my comments: the characteristics of a profession include professional associations, cognitive base, institutionalized training/education, licensing, and a code of ethics. Professions are also occupations with special power and prestige, and whose members possess specialized training, and who generates an esprit de corps among members of the same profession.

I would like to focus on how the power of an esprit de corps can move mountains. In the early days of 1982, I was a family child care provider in Arizona and deeply concerned about how to reach out to others who also viewed themselves as small business owners, providing a greatly needed community service. I had met someone who was interested, from an organizational perspective, in supporting family child care providers organize and begin to support one another through community-based training programs. During my engagement with this individual, he asked me if I would consider representing the Southwest at a national convening of other family child care providers through an organization known as the Children's Foundation. I was 31 years old at the time and thought I could do most anything! The world and all it had to offer me was like fruit hanging on a low branch...all I had to do was to reach out and pluck it!

In April of 1982 I joined eleven other family child care providers from various parts of the United States and marched off to Washington, DC to participate in this convening. During that week, I visited our national capitol for the...
I am the Internship Coordinator for the Early Childhood Department at Rio Salado College. Prior to coming to Rio Salado College, I was an Assistant Principal for a K-2 elementary school in Middletown NY. I was very fortunate to work with highly qualified staff and dedicated parents who had high expectations for their children to succeed. Throughout my career, I was driven by the importance of early childhood education and the need for experienced educators who believed in their profession and for the contributions that they could make to the field.

As students completing internships, your internship provides you with the opportunity to put theory to practice and enables you to fully understand how the standards and competencies from your courses are connected to your classroom practice. In addition to your commitment to the field, the way in which you conduct yourself as a professional will be one of the keys to your success. Keep in mind that, as an intern, you will be judged by your attire, verbal and nonverbal interactions and your overall attitude toward students, parents and staff.

Here are some tips to consider when you start your internship:

Use good judgment in choosing the clothes you wear to school. Check with the school and ask if they have a dress policy. If you are not sure about a particular piece of clothing, err on the side of caution because clothes that are too short or revealing are not appropriate choices.

Take pride in your personal appearance. Be sure to present yourself in a neat and well groomed way. Visible body piercing and tattoos may be a statement about your individuality and style but it may be a distraction in the classroom.

Maintain good habits of speech at all times. Refrain from using slang and inappropriate language.

Consider your actions and the way you behave with others. Remember that you are a role model for your students.

Remember that students, parents, teachers and school personnel will view and form opinions regarding your professionalism. Therefore, make sure that you create a good first impression.

If you have any questions about professionalism or internships, please e-mail me at: barbara.reiss@riosalado.edu.
Supporting Your Success

Using “My Plan” in ESF

Once you have a Program Checksheet in ESF (Electronic Student File) you can make a list of your remaining courses and plan for the completion of your program. For ESF login instructions, please see www.riosalado.edu/esf.

To start using this planning tool, login to ESF and click on “Plan Your Terms at Rio” under the “My Plan” tab. You can now add your remaining courses to the list on the right. Your advisor can assist you with this. Your advisor contact information is in your ESF account.

Once you have your list made on the right you can start planning which courses you will take each semester. You can drag courses from the list on the right to the semesters on the left. You can plan out all of your courses and know the semester that you will be ready to graduate! Another useful planning feature is each semester has a dropdown feature for the Block Calendar dates. You can use this feature to plan the specific dates you will start each semester.

You can request a review of your plan by your advisor by clicking “Changed: Request Review”. Your advisor can then make any necessary advisor notes for you and create a “snapshot” of your approved plan.

There is a question mark in the upper right that has further instructions on these features. Your advisor is there to assist you with your planning; just give them a call or send them an email. And remember to apply for graduation in your final semester!

Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society

Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) is the International Honor Society of the community college. Phi Theta Kappa emphasizes four hallmarks: Scholarship, Service, Leadership and Fellowship. These hallmarks serve as the foundation for PTK activities. Thus, Phi Theta Kappa not only recognizes community college students who have achieved academic excellence, but it also calls for students to engage in service, to grow as leaders, and to become effective advocates for excellence on campus and in their communities. Chapters and members are encouraged to use scholarly research to identify college and community problems and then employ leadership skills and service to provide solutions to these problems.

At Rio Salado College (RSC) to be eligible for membership in Phi Theta Kappa you need:

- A 3.5 GPA or higher
- At least 12 credits of 100-level or higher courses (could be at any of the Maricopa Community Colleges)
- You must be enrolled in at least one Rio Salado course during the semester of application.

There is currently a membership fee of $84.00. You can be an active member as long as you stay enrolled in at least one course per semester at RSC.

Benefits to membership include scholarship opportunities, the opportunity to participate in PTK leadership and service projects, the use of College-Fish.org (a college transfer planning program), letters of recommendation sent to admissions counselors and potential employers, the golden key membership pin, an embossed certificate, the opportunity to wear the PTK Honors regalia at graduation. In addition, there is a press release announcing your membership, the privilege of using Phi Theta Kappa membership on your résumé and scholarship applications, and use of the Five Star Competitive Edge—a personal and professional development planning program. Participation in chapter activities is recommended but not required to be a member of Phi Theta Kappa.

For more information about Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society at Rio Salado College, please contact John Bastian at John.Bastian@riosalado.edu or 480-517-8656.
Student Success Today

Sara’s Story by Sara Lee

When I was in high school, I realized that I enjoyed working with children while taking a Child Development class as an elective. As students, we were required to work in the preschool at the high school for part of the semester. I was hooked! During my senior year I joined the HERO (Home Economic Related Occupations) club and worked in an after-school program at a local elementary schools. After finishing high school, I worked at a Montessori school as an Assistant Teacher in the school-age classroom and then the toddler classroom. When working in the two-year old classroom, I realized that I truly enjoyed that age group and decided to focus my training on infant/toddler development.

In 1997, I moved to Phoenix to help care for my family. At that time I began my career at Lincoln Learning Center (LLC) in October. I started as an Assistant Teacher-On Call. I took a few courses through Central Arizona College (CAC) and was promoted to be a part-time Teacher. Within two months my part-time position became a full-time position in a two-year old classroom. I was once again hooked! It was during this time that the Lincoln Learning Center (LLC) developed a work-study program with CAC and an Early Childhood Education advisor/teacher came in on a weekly basis to work with the staff to earn college credits towards a CDA National Credential. I signed up and took a one-credit class each month. In June 1999, I received my CDA credential in Infant/Toddler Care, just in time to become a stay-at-home mom when my son was born in January. At that point, I assumed my “educational journey” was complete.

In June 2000, I discovered that circumstances would cause me to return to work and decided to return back to Lincoln Learning Center, this time as a Lead Teacher in the Infant classroom. LLC was expanding, so I also worked with the administrative staff to set up a new two-year old classroom (that I would eventually take the lead in).

In 2009, a program called PITC (Program for Infant Toddle Care) come into LLC, which offered college credit courses through Rio Salado College. I needed to take additional college credits to renew my CDA so I signed up. After realizing how beneficial it was for me to take classes on-line, I decided to look into taking more classes through Rio Salado. This lead me to where I am today.

I have continued taking classes through Rio and recently earned my Academic Certificate in Professional Development–Infant/Toddler. I am continuing my coursework towards an AA in Early Learning and Development and will graduate, hopefully, this year. I would not have been able to do all this without the conveniences of Rio Salado’s on-line classes. I am a single parent and my son has autism. I work full-time and take him to therapies five days a week. It is while he is in therapy or late at night while he is sleeping that I can work on my courses. It may not be the most convenient scenario, but it works for me. It has been a long hard road but with the support of Rio Salado’s Early Childhood Education and Human Development program, and with the help of the ECEHD Navigator, I know that I will succeed.

I have recently been promoted to the Administrative Coordinator at Lincoln Learning Center and in this position, I help families through their enrollment process, and assist teachers with children in the classroom. As I have said many times, I am hooked! I am in a profession where I feel that I have the chance to make a difference.
Lincoln Learning Center has a rich and lengthy presence in the Phoenix community. The center was started by the Desert Mission in 1939, and was called the Desert Mission Nursery. At that time, the school was housed in small cottages. In 1959, Helen C Lincoln Nursery School was established in a small building. In 1988, it was apparent that the size of the program had become too large for such a small place, so they moved the Nursery into its current location at 303 E Eva Street in Phoenix, and renamed it Lincoln Learning Center (funding was donated by the Lincoln family). In 1993, Lincoln Learning Center became an NAEYC accredited center and has maintained its accreditation status ever since.

At present, LLC serves about 320 children, with an average daily enrollment of 160 children, serving children from all walks of life. Enrollment consists of private pay families, hospital employee children, DES clients and First Things First Scholarship recipients. LLC is able to tap into social/medical services through the Desert Mission Programs were they have the ability to refer children and families that are in need to the Children's Dental Clinic (which also comes to the center twice a year to screen the children in the classroom), Community Health Center (which is available to children who are in need of medical services but do not have insurance or have limited funds), the Marley House (which is the behavioral health clinic that offers family counseling and support as well as scholarships to help those that can benefit from tuition assistance), and a Food Bank (that offers not only food, but also sponsors back pack programs and “adopt a family” over the holidays). LLC is also a Quality First center, which is part of First Things First.

Along with the above services, LLC has on staff a Child Health Consultant, R.N. that, through a grant from United Way and the Lincoln Network Foundation, has been able to offer help and support in the classroom for children with special and unique needs. She is also able to administer medications and is a resource for teachers. LLC participates in “Smart Support” which is a program offered through Southwest Human Development through First Things First. This collaboration allows for a behavior management counselor to come in once a week and target certain children with challenging behaviors, and then will meet with the teaching team to design strategies to help the children be more successful in the classroom. The teachers at LLC share how very helpful all of these services and supports are to them.

The Learning Lincoln Learning teams utilize “Teaching Strategies Gold” for lesson planning, observing and assessing the children, and for portfolio record keeping. Teachers appreciate the support this curriculum gives them to develop lesson plans, and the information that can be shared with parents as they see the objectives and goals that each activity is trying to help their child reach. Families can access the site at any time, not only to check the classroom lesson plans and observations, but to also communicate via email any concerns or questions they may have to their child’s teacher. The teaching teams also use the “American Academy of Pediatrics Developmental Checklists” and “Get Ready to Read” tools to evaluate the developmental readiness of each child who is 3-5 years old. The Arizona Literacy and Learning Center, which comes in twice a year, does a full developmental screening for all of the children over the age of three, free of charge. Although teachers communicate verbally with parents a regular basis, they also conduct formal conferences three times a year with families, to review conference reports and the results from any conducted screenings.

If you asked the teaching team, what is the one thing that you appreciate in working at the LLC, they would unanimously share that it is the support that teachers offer each other. They are a true “team” in every sense of the word. Lincoln Learning Center has a low turnover rate, with most teachers being employed with LLC for at least 5 years, and some being with the center for over 20 years. “We all work well together and offer support and encouragement for one another. We truly are a team.”
Embrace the Professional in You

Today you are reading this article because something inside you is pulling you toward a goal. You have become part of the Rio Salado Community and started your journey toward becoming a professional.

Being a professional means more than dressing smartly for work, doing a good job or having advanced degrees or certifications. It is a frame of mind supported by practices that respond to a calling and requires specialized knowledge and academic preparation. A good example of professionalism is in this newsletter with Sara’s story. This story demonstrates her feeling “hooked” into working with children from a very young age and her journey has taken her through 19 years of ongoing education and service.

There are three qualities that you possess and are aligned with the professional inside you. It is time to embrace those qualities and own them. These attributes will not only help you reach your goals, they will help you be successful in whatever you pursue.

- Competency
- Courage
- Discipline

The first quality is your competency or specialized knowledge. You have made a deep personal commitment to develop and improve your skills. The professional in you is working in a serious, thoughtful and sustained way to master the specialized knowledge needed to succeed in your field. Acknowledge and appreciate your curiosity and your desire to keep up to date so you can continue to deliver the best work possible to the people you serve.

Embrace your courage. Professionals exhibit honesty and integrity. They keep their word and can be trusted. Think about the ways you stay true to your values and do the right thing even when it means taking a harder road. The professional in you is humble. Professionals know what they know and know what they don’t know. They are willing to learn from others and are able to ask for help when needed. Think about how you hold yourself accountable. Professionals are accountable for their thoughts, words and actions. They do not stay long in excuse stories but move into solution, commitment and amends. They are people who show up on time, follow-through with what they say they are going to do and are willing to admit to mistakes and correct them.

How would you rate yourself in discipline? The professional in you self-regulates when under stress. Professionals show respect for others no matter what the situation or role. They learn to manage their emotions and are able to consider the emotions and needs of others. They create time-management and self-care practices to balance their personal and professional lives. The professional in you honors your commitments and focuses on meeting expectations.

Think about the ways you demonstrate competency, courage and discipline. Embrace the professional in you and watch the results. We all have the ability to grow with each experience that comes along in our journey. Bring these qualities up to date and the professional in you will guide you into extraordinary places.

Di is the founder of Arizona Partners, an international coaching and consulting business. Di has been in business for over 29 years and for the last 11 years has provided Best Year Yet programs and presentations throughout the United States and Europe. She currently serves as their International BYYO Coaching Certification trainer.

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Dr. Sue’s Book Corner

The Mentor’s Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships (2nd Ed.)

By: Lois J. Zachary

Rich in advice and mindful of the message, The Mentor's Guide explores the process of mentoring, offering practical tools, self-assessment activities and information based on solid knowledge regarding the adult learner. Examples in the text are relevant throughout and the interactive exercises take learning to the next level of engagement.

Published by Jossey-Bass Press, this 288-page text is chocked full of real stories and situations that bring the content to life. A must read for any manager or mentor working and/or training others.
From the Director (Cont'd pg. 1)

first time in my life, met other committed and energized family child care providers and joined a national movement to form an organization for family child care providers. The twelve of us thought we were at the “just in time” point of the rise of professionalism within the early childhood field to give “birth” to an organization devoted exclusively to the needs of family child care, the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). In the ensuing 29 years and thousands of members later, NAFCC hosts annual conferences in various U.S. cities, has a twenty-year old accreditation program, sponsors a national training institute and connects thousands of family child care providers across the country and around the world.

As I have professionally grown since my beginnings as a family child care provider, I would like to encourage each of you to engage in the esprit de corps of our overall field and participate in professionally-based activities beyond the college classes you take...

- Do you participate in Rio’s conferences and community-based seminars?
- What about other conferences and professional development opportunities sponsored by other early childhood organizations?
- Are you a member of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and our local affiliate?
- If you are a family child care provider, do you belong to NAFCC?
- If you are a director or administrator do you belong to the National Association of Child Care Professionals and/or the Arizona Child Care Association?

I challenge you to reach out, join our profession’s esprit de corps and get involved!

National Association of Child Care Professionals
http://www.naccp.org/

Arizona Child Care Association
http://azcca.org

National Association for Family Child Care
http://nafcc.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children http://naeyc.org

Arizona is Achieving Professionalism through Academic Success (AzAPAS)

AzAPAS is a student success and retention assessment program designed to assist early childhood practitioners in determining what personal/professional/educational barriers may restrict them from completing their college educational plans and goals. Powered by validated assessment tools, early childhood practitioners complete online adult learning tools designed to measure an individual’s motivation to learn, motivation to complete educational plans, and what college services an individual may need to access for success. Participants also receive feedback towards meeting their education goals utilizing their previous education and training.

Results from these assessment tools will be used by Rio Salado College and early childhood practitioners who participate in this program to design an individualized education plan that is sensitive to the barriers identified. This project targets early childhood practitioners who are interested in completing national credentials or college degrees.

For more information on how Rio Salado College can assist in your staff development needs, please contact:

René Manning, M.Ed., Project Manager
Phone: (480) 517-8120
Email: rene.manning@riomail.maricopa.edu

This newsletter, The Navigator, is sent to you in an effort to support your success at attaining your higher education certificate and/or degree(s). Any topics, articles, concepts, or ideas that you have for future content of this newsletter are greatly appreciated. Please let the Rio Salado Early Childhood Education Navigator know your thoughts. E-mail your ideas to Navigator.ecehd@riosalado.edu.