

SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

CASE STUDY HIGHLIGHTS



Why communication is so important



Mutual commitment to training



The benefit of strong relationships between
RTOs and employers

Brent Stokes is General Manager of Scholars Consulting, part of The Scholars Group, a consultancy group that supports early learning (childcare) Approved Providers (owners) to operate high quality early learning services. Being part of early childhood education and care for over fifteen years, including owning and managing four centres employing about 80 staff, he's experienced firsthand the challenge of finding a high-quality training provider. He's seen the standard of training in the sector improve significantly over time. After working with many training providers, his organisation's preferred RTO is currently the College for Australian Early Childhood Educators (CAECE).

CAECE is owned by the Australian Child Care Alliance (Qld), the member association for Approved Providers (owners) of early learning (childcare) centres in Queensland, and delivers training to over 200 services state-wide. CAECE was established just over six years ago in response to a recognised need for quality providers in the sector. Essentially, employers built the RTO, which makes it a uniquely employer-driven provider. CAECE markets itself to employers as 'Your RTO', working hard to make the catch phrase a reality.



As Mandy Walker, CAECE's Training Operations Manager says,

“

While we naturally have strong relationships with employers because we're owned by the Australian Child Care Alliance Qld, we still need to work at developing and maintaining relationships with individual employers.”

STRONG RELATIONSHIPS BOOST OUTCOMES

In CAECE's experience, strong relationships with employers are vital to students' success.

“We work together to support students and help them complete their training. One of the benefits of a close collaborative relationship between employers and RTOs is better student outcomes and higher completion rates.”
(Mandy Walker)

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL

According to Mandy, one key to successful collaboration is effective communication. When they first start working with an employer they establish clear lines of communication for all aspects of training, from sending invoices to discussions about student progress. This is tailored according to the size and needs of the service. They use a learning management system that, with the permission of employees, allows employers to login at any time to see the students' progress, notes, and assessment due dates.

They're very transparent with employers and involve them at each step of the learning journey, from enrolment to completion. Every communication about a student's progress goes to the employer as well as the student, whether it's a success or a challenge. For example, when students complete a unit, a congratulatory email is sent to the employer and when a student falls behind in their progression, the employer is contacted.

MUTUAL COMMITMENT

Another key success factor is mutual commitment to the requirements of training. When looking for an RTO, Brent says he wants to know how much high-quality service they provide the student early childhood educators, how many students a trainer is looking after at any one time, how often they interact with and visit students face-to-face, how accessible they are and how much support they give students.

Equally, CAECE wants to know that employers are committed to the training process and willing to give students the time-off and support they need to succeed. CAECE has a robust initial engagement which sets out the obligations of each party. For example, trainers need to be able to engage meaningfully with students when they visit the workplace, which requires that employers give them time away from their duties caring for children. CAECE conducts an initial enrolment interview with employers to discuss these and other roles and responsibilities.

Brent recognises the importance of employer commitment and tries to play his part in making students and trainers feel valued and supported.

“When a student graduates, we try to have as many of our team members in management there on the day. We celebrate with a certificate plus flowers. I believe that commitment to the educator, and the commitment to the sector really supports the educator's passion...”

ENGAGEMENT PROVIDES OUTCOMES

When both an RTO and employer are committed to high quality training and student success, and invest the required time and effort, their collaboration yields quality outcomes and mutual benefits. CAECE has a strong culture and ethos of providing quality training and meeting employers' needs. They find that employers respond positively and are typically very committed, engaged and willing to give back to the RTO. It becomes a mutually beneficial engagement that leads to better outcomes for all those involved.

