

Session II: A Staff to Deliver Quality Content and Skills

Helping children acquire necessary education knowledge and skills can only be done by competent personnel. In attempting to review the quality staffing issue, Institute staff encountered numerous problems in trying to identify and interpret data. Our efforts—which included contacting the leading early childhood professional organizations in the country, scouring their web sites for information and data, and reviewing information on state licensing and credentialing policies—has led us to the conclusion that the data available is inadequate. This is due mainly to the inability of states to track information about unlicensed child care centers, and confusion in terminology within the profession itself.

During our investigation of state licensure patterns, we encountered a problem in the verbiage states use to describe even the pre-service teaching requirements for public school teachers. Some states tend to use the terms “licensure” and “certification” interchangeably. However, to many within the profession these two terms have very different and specific meanings. “Licensure” simply indicates that the state has approved a person to teach children. “Certification” on the other hand indicates that a teacher has reached a higher level of teaching through coursework, classroom experience, and portfolio assessments or by obtaining additional degrees.

In the early childhood field, whether at the federal, state or program level, there is no common definition of “teacher.” Some centers call all staff “teachers,” while others differentiate between a “teacher” and a “classroom aide” or “paraprofessional.” The Bureau of Labor Statistics distinguishes between the two by defining a “preschool teacher” as someone who instructs children in a pre-school program or child care center and a “child care worker” as someone who dresses, bathes and feeds children and who supervises play. In general, the term “teacher” is used loosely in the early childhood field and more likely than not means that staff qualifications are very low.

The terminology confusion added to our data collection problems. We encountered, for example, irreconcilable data in examining two reports on state “licensure” patterns published in 1997. The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education’s report *Training Requirements in Child Care Licensing that Promote a Career Development Approach* presented data on licensure patterns across the country indicating that there were 21 states that required licensure in order to teach young children. Another report, *Early Childhood Teacher Education Licensure Patterns and Curriculum Guidelines*, issued the same year indicated that only 16 states required some sort of early childhood teaching licensure.

Another problem we had in collecting systematic data is that definitions of the time span covered by programs addressing “early childhood” vary greatly, from state to state, and sometimes even within a given state. NAEYC, the country’s most well known accrediting body for early childhood programs, defines early childhood as ages 0-8, while Florida’s definition covers from 0-4 years, and Texas says it is from age three until the sixth grade. These conflicting definitions repeat themselves in each and every state.

Background

Regardless of these stumbling blocks, the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, based on estimates, publishes general workforce statistics on pre-school teachers and child care workers. The latest information (1998) from the Bureau indicates that:

- 40% of preschool teachers and child care workers – more than 4 times the proportion for all workers – are self-employed; most of these are family child care providers.
- Each state has its own licensing requirements ranging from a high school diploma to a specified number of community college courses, to a college degree in child development or early childhood education.
- Some states require continuing education for workers.
- Some employers prefer to hire preschool teachers and child care workers with a nationally recognized child care development credential, secondary or postsecondary course in child development and early childhood education.
- Pay depends on the educational attainment of the worker and the type of establishment. Although the pay is generally very low, more education brings higher earnings in some cases. Median annual earnings of preschool teachers were \$17,310 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$13,760 and \$22,370. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$12,000 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$30,310.
- Median hourly earnings of child care workers were \$6.61 in 1998. The middle 50 percent earned between \$5.82 and \$8.13. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$5.49 and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$9.65.

Information Collected for this Session

The most recent data (2000) collected from each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia (collected by Wheelock College's Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education) regarding their early childhood teacher education licensure (whatever that means) indicates that the number of states that require pre-service training in early childhood education are:

- 21 states for teachers
- 35 states for center directors, and
- 11 states for family child care providers

The number of states that require annual ongoing professional development are:

- 44 states for teachers

- 42 states for center directors, and
- 31 states for family child care providers.

(SOURCE: *Child Care Licensing: Qualifications and Training Requirements for Roles in Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes*, The Center for Career Development in Early Care and Education at Wheelock College, 2000.)

A number of organizations have attempted to set standards for high quality early childhood teacher preparation. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the most widely recognized center accrediting body, has developed guidelines for initial baccalaureate and advanced programs aimed at qualifying early childhood teachers and center directors. NAEYC has attempted to align these guidelines with other standards, such as those of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which accredits schools of education, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), which grants advanced certification to exceptional teachers. However, the profession does not always see the relationships among these sets of standards. In fact, most early childhood teacher preparation programs in institutions of higher education tend to reflect the teacher licensure standards of the state. In other words, there are multiple definitions of a qualified early childhood teacher.

(SOURCE: *New Teachers for a New Century: The Future of Early Childhood Professional Preparation*, U.S. Department of Education, 2000.)

The amount of coursework and field experience specific to early childhood credentials or endorsements also varies considerably from state-to-state. Twenty-nine states have no pre-service training requirements whatsoever. Eight states require that a potential “teacher” hold an early childhood teaching credential such as the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or the Certified Childcare Professional (CCP) credential. Only one state (Rhode Island) requires that a candidate hold a bachelor’s degree prior to becoming an early childhood “teacher”.

Two non-degree early childhood teaching credentials are readily identifiable. The most prevalent of these credentials is the Child Development Associate credential or CDA. The CDA was created in 1971 to specifically qualify staff to work in Head Start programs. Since then, more than 100,000 credentials have been granted both to Head Start employees, as well as to the staff of other types of centers and to family child care providers. Today, the CDA is written into the licensing requirements of all but two states as one way of qualifying for an early childhood “teaching” position. In fact, 90 percent of Head Start “teachers” hold one of the following credentials: a CDA, a teacher’s certificate in early childhood education, or a bachelor’s degree.

Up until recently, the CDA credential was the minimum requirement for teaching under federal Head Start standards. However, under the 1998 Head Start reauthorization Congress mandated a requirement that 50 percent of Head Start classroom staff have an A.S. (2 year degree from a community college) or B.S. (4 year degree from a college or university) degree by September 30, 2003. One state (Ohio), has gone so far as to pass legislation that requires that all Head Start teachers have an A.S. or B.S. by the year

2006. Ultimately, the CDA is being phased out by Head Start in favor of a slightly more advanced education and training.

(SOURCE: *Seeds of Success: State Prekindergarten Initiatives 1998-1999*, Children's Defense Fund, 1999.)

The National Child Care Association (NCCA) offers a credential similar to the CDA—the Certified Childcare Professional (CCP) credential. According to the NCCA, Much like the CDA, the CCP is offered in an attempt to ensure that individuals working in early childhood settings acquire the practical skills and knowledge that reflect the “highest standards of professional expertise.” There is little substantive difference between the requirements of the CCP and the CDA.

- Substantial classroom experience working with young children;
- Extensive professional development through seminars, workshops, conferences, in-service training, and coursework in university or community college settings;
- Successful completion of an examination that reflects the standards and skills needed to work with young children;
- Submission of a professional portfolio; and
- Substantive evaluation by other professionals (peer review).

Of the two credentials the CDA is generally more accepted simply because it is thirty years old, has been written into legislation defining early childhood teaching requirements in 48 states, and has been issued to significantly more professionals.

The general guidelines for all of these credentials, as well as for higher education degrees in early childhood education, seem to be reiterations of each other. While the CDA lists six “Competency Goals” attached to thirteen “functional areas” in which candidates must demonstrate competence, the CCP lists fifteen “Professional Ability Areas” that are merely reflections of the CDA standards. The NBPTS standards for early childhood education are remarkably similar to both the CDA standards and the CCP ability areas. Furthermore, the standards for all three credentials correlate to NAEYC’s *Guidelines for Associate Degree-Granting Institutions* and the *Guidelines for Four- and Five-Year Institutions (Initial Certification)* – which are, in themselves, only slightly more expansive than the guidelines for two-year institutions.

The highest qualifying program is the certification granted by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. In the 2000-2001 school year, NBPTS began offering Early Childhood/Generalist certification. “Certification,” which reflects the Board’s early childhood education teaching standards, is content focused and requires that candidates hold a baccalaureate degree at a minimum; have taught for at least three years at the early childhood level; and have held a valid state teaching license for each of those years. The assessment process consists of two components (the portfolio and a one-day assessment that includes a four-part examination). Certification is based on each candidate’s performance as judged against the NBPTS standards for accomplished practice—widely accepted as the highest standards in the profession.

Readings

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Summary

Background Memo, Albert Shanker Institute Staff

Other Materials

The Child Development Associate National Credentialing Program: General Information. Council for Professional Recognition, February 2000. (in pocket)

“Components of the Credentialing Process,” *Certified Childcare Professional Credentialing Program for the Early Childhood Education Specialists*, National Child Care Association, Inc., 1992.

Executive Summary of *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers*, National Research Council, National Academy Press, 2000. (in pocket)

“Early Childhood/Generalist,” description of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards’ certification requirements.

“HSIPC-2000 Head Start Program Instruction: Head Start Funding Increase for Fiscal Year 2000,” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, January 2000.

NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation (Draft)

“NCATE Program Standards: Initial and Advanced Programs in Early Childhood Education,” National Association for the Education of Young Children, September 1994.

Worthy Work, Unlivable Wages: The National Child Care Staffing Study, 1988-1997, Center for the Child Care Workforce, 1998

