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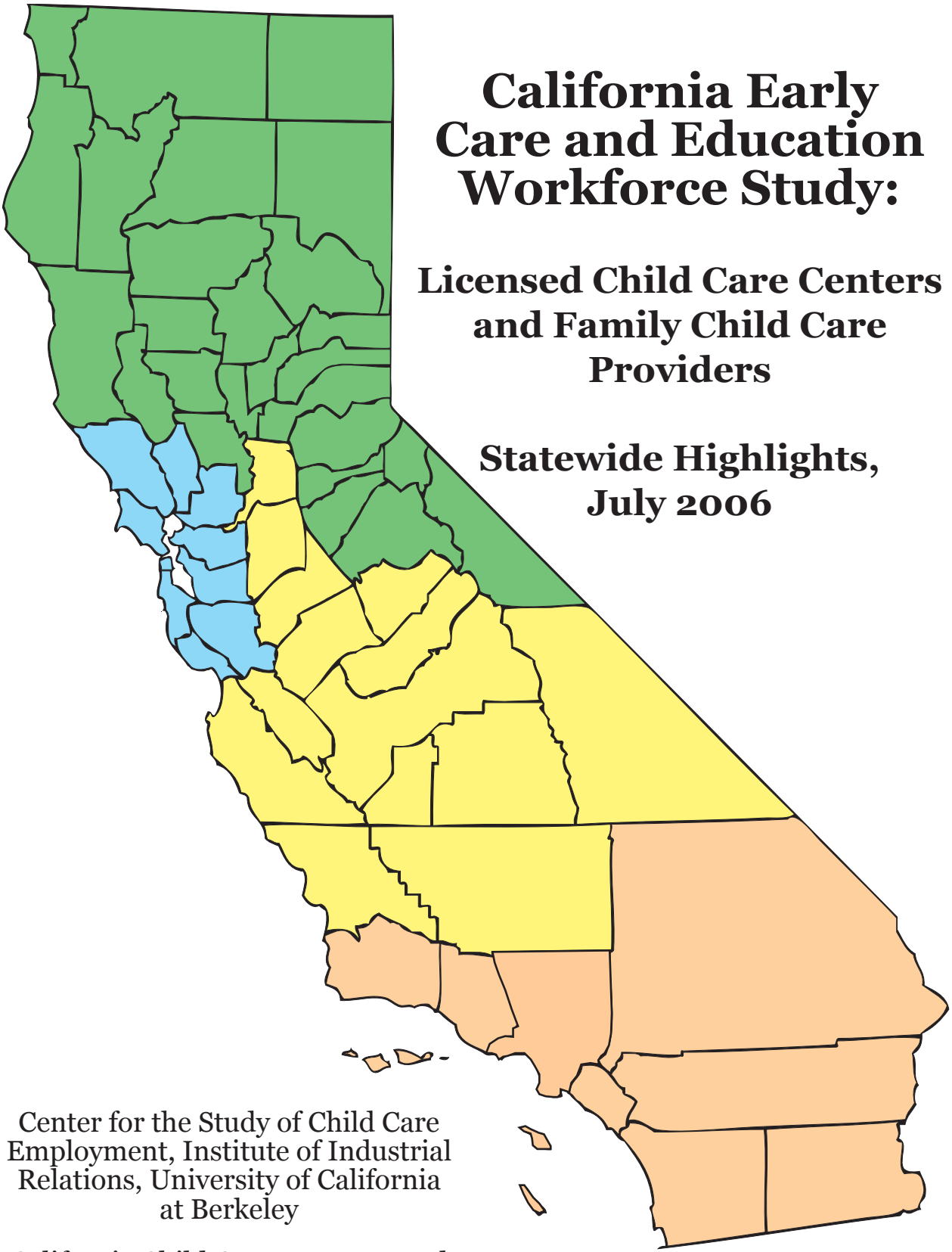


# California Early Care and Education Workforce Study:

## Licensed Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Providers

## Statewide Highlights, July 2006

Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California at Berkeley

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network

Recognizing the critical role that early childhood educators play in the lives of children and families, First 5 California commissioned in 2004 a statewide and regional study of California's early care and education (ECE) workforce in licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes. The overall goal of the study was to collect information on the current characteristics of this workforce—particularly its educational background, and its potential needs for further professional development. This study provides a baseline for measuring future progress toward attaining a well-educated and diverse ECE workforce; it does not, however, assess teachers' and providers' overall knowledge and skills, or the content of training and coursework they have completed.

First 5 California sought statewide information about licensed family child care providers and about teachers, assistant teachers and directors employed in licensed child care centers, as well as regional comparisons with respect to demographics and child care supply.[1] We divided the state's 58 counties into four regions: the Bay Area, and Northern, Central, and Southern California. The sampling plans for the center and family child care studies were developed to ensure that there were enough completed interviews in each of the four regions to provide a reliable profile of each area, and to compare data across regions. Data were weighted by the proportion of centers and family child care homes in each region; all results are based on weighted data. (See cover for map of regions.)

The survey population included the 37,366 active licensed homes and 8,740 active licensed centers, serving children from birth to five years, that were listed as of January 2004 with state-funded child care resource and referral agencies. The Field Research Corporation, Inc., collected data from a statewide random sample of 1,800 licensed family child care homes and 1,921 centers, using a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) system. Family child care interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, and center interviews were conducted with the director in English. For more information about methodology, see the full study reports at the First 5 California website, http://www/ccfc.ca.gov.

1 Nine counties (Alameda, Los Angeles, Marin, Merced, Mono, Sacramento, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Santa Clara) contracted for county-specific studies of their licensed child care homes and centers. These study reports are available at the First 5 California website, http://www.ccfc.ca.gov. .

# Who are the providers, teachers, assistant teachers and directors in California's licensed child care homes and centers?

California's ECE workforce includes approximately 130,000 people, predominantly female, who educate and care for about 750,000 infants (birth to age 2) and/or preschoolers (ages 2-5, pre-kindergarten). This workforce includes about 37,500 providers and 18,500 paid assistants in licensed family child care homes, and 45,000 teachers, 23,000 assistant teachers and 7,000 directors in licensed child care centers.

### *Age and Tenure*

The typical licensed family child care provider is in her mid-forties and has been taking care of children in her home for ten years; 7% are age 29 or younger, and 21% are age 55 or older. Average tenure is 12 years for providers licensed to care for 14 children, and 8 years for those licensed for 8 children.

Center teachers and assistants are younger, on average, than providers, and have typically been on the job for less than five years:

Table 1. *Age and Tenure of Center-Based Teachers and Assistant Teachers*

| | Teachers | Assistant Teachers |
|---|---|---|
| 29 or younger | 33% | 49% |
| 50 or older | 15% | 9% |
| Employed at center 5 years or more | 39% | 24% |

### *Teacher Wages and Staff Turnover*

Among ECE center staff, wages are low and job turnover is high:

- Average annual salary for centers' highest-paid teachers with a BA or higher degree is $34,382, nearly $16,000 less than that of the average California public school kindergarten teacher, who typically works a shorter year and earns better benefits.
- Average wage for centers' highest-paid assistant teachers ranges from $9.28 to $11.21 per hour.
- Annual ECE teacher turnover (22%) is twice that of California public school K-12 teachers (11%) (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). ECE assistant teacher turnover is at 26%, and director turnover at 18%.

The study did not collect data about family child care provider earnings.

### *Ethnicity*

California's ECE workforce is ethnically diverse, far more closely reflecting the ethnic distribution of the state's young children than K-12 public school teachers. (See Table 2.) Family child care providers and assistant teachers are more likely to be women of color than teachers, who, in turn, are more ethnically diverse than directors. Centers holding a contract with the California Department of Education (CDE) or Head Start typically employ the most ethnically diverse staff. Workforce ethnicity differs by region, reflecting to some extent regional differences in the adult female population as a whole, with Northern California being far less diverse than other parts of the state.

### *Language*

Family child care providers were

Table 2. *Ethnicity of California ECE Workforce, K-12 Teachers and Children Birth to Five*

| | Family Child Care Providers | Center Teachers | Assistant Teachers | Directors | K-12 Teachers | CA Children 0-5 Years |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| White, Non-Hispanic | 42% | 53% | 37% | 62% | 74% | 30% |
| Latina | 35% | 27% | 42% | 16% | 14% | 50% |
| African American | 15% | 7% | 8% | 9% | 5% | 6% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 5% | 5% | 8% | 6% | 6% | 10% |
| Other | 3% | 8% | 5% | 7% | 1% | 4% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

asked whether they could speak fluently with children and families in a language other than English; directors were asked whether they or any of their teachers or assistant teachers could do so. Our description of language ability is based on these reports. Further, directors' reports did not permit us to assess whether staff who spoke a language other than English also spoke English fluently.

Licensed family child care providers, and assistant teachers in centers, are more linguistically diverse than the California adult population, 64% of whom speak English only (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Providers (43%) and assistant teachers (49%) are the most likely, and teachers (37%) and directors (25%) are less likely, to be able to communicate fluently with children and families in a language other than English. Seventy-two percent of centers employ at least one teacher, 66% employ at least one assistant, and 29% employ at least one director, with such language ability. After English, Spanish is the second language most commonly spoken.

## What are the characteristics of children served by California's licensed family child care providers and child care centers licensed to serve infants and/or preschoolers?

Licensed family child care programs in California serve approximately 250,000 children, and licensed centers serve approximately 500,000 children birth to age 5.

*Family Child Care*

- 80% of children are not yet in kindergarten
- 50% of children are age 2 or younger
- 54% of providers care for at least one child receiving public child care subsidy
- 21% of providers care for at least one child with special needs

*Centers*

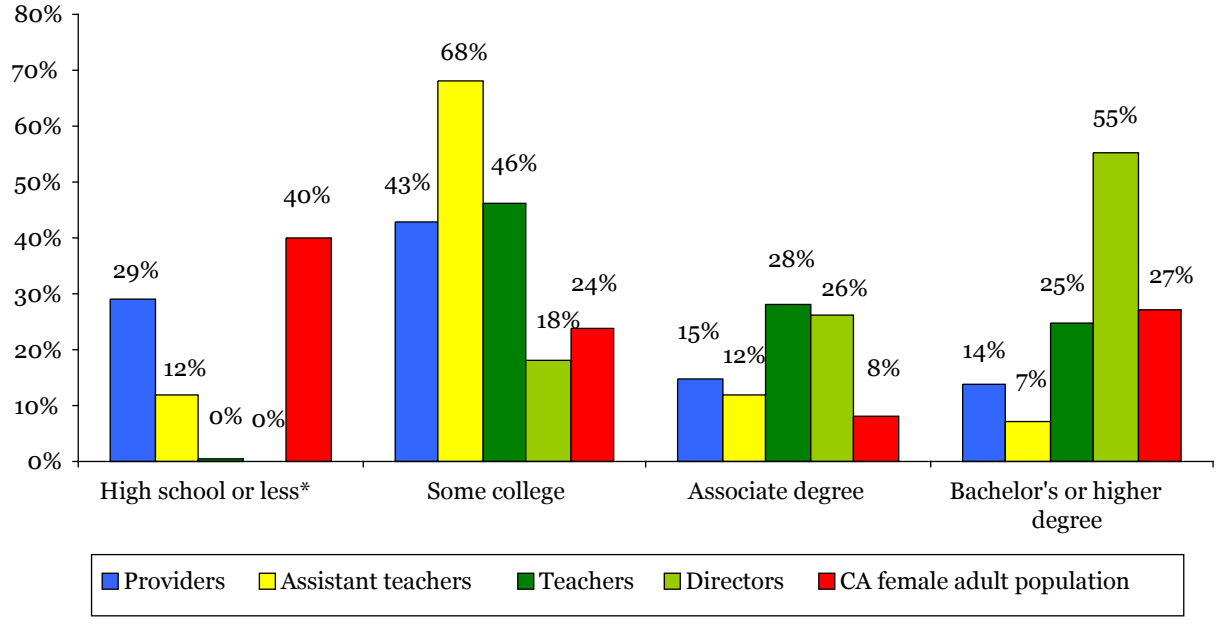
- 66% of children in centers licensed to serve infants and/or preschoolers are between the ages of 3 and 5
- 71% of centers care for at least one child receiving public subsidy, either through a contract with CDE or Head Start (30%) or a voucher (41%)
- 56% of centers care for at least one child with special needs

# What is the level of educational attainment and early childhood development-related training for California's ECE workforce?

Educational requirements vary for the California ECE workforce, depending on whether they work in licensed homes or centers, and whether centers hold a contract with CDE or Head Start. Licensed family child providers are required only to complete 15 hours of non-credit training on preventive health practices, whereas teachers and directors in licensed centers, but not assistants, must complete 12 college credits of early childhood education. In centers holding contracts with CDE, teachers and directors are required to complete 24 credits of early childhood education and 16 credits of general education at the college level, and directors must also complete at least 8 credits related to administration.

Reflecting these requirements, center staff have attained higher levels of education than family child care providers, but on average, both family child care providers and center staff exceed state requirements. Compared to California's overall adult female population, center teachers are equally likely and center directors more likely to have completed a bachelor's or higher degree, and licensed family child care providers and assistant teachers are more likely to have attended college and/or completed an associate degree. Forty percent of centers employ no teachers with a BA or higher degree.

Figure 1. *Estimated Educational Attainment of the ECE Workforce Compared to the California Female Adult Population: Statewide*




* Because of the wording of the questionnaire, some assistant teachers in this category may have taken college credits unrelated to ECE.
*Source:* U.S. Census (2000).

### *ECE-Related Degrees and Foreign Degrees*

*Family Child Care Providers*

- 34% of licensed family child care providers with an associate degree or higher hold a degree related to early childhood education
- 30% of providers with a bachelor's degree earned the degree from a foreign institution

*Center-Based Teachers*

- 64% of center-based teachers with a bachelor's degree or higher hold a degree related to early childhood education
- 16% of teachers with a bachelor's degree or higher earned the degree from a foreign institution

## How do levels of overall educational attainment, and training related to early childhood development, vary among members of the ECE workforce?

Levels of education among providers and teachers vary by region, and generally follow the patterns of variation in educational attainment among all adults in the state, with those in the Bay Area reporting higher levels. Education levels also vary by age, ethnicity and language; by the ages of children served (in centers, not homes); and by centers' and homes' public subsidy status.

### *Variation in Educational Attainment By Region*

Levels of education among providers and teachers vary by region, and generally follow the patterns of variation in educational attainment among all adults in the state, with those in the Bay Area reporting higher levels. Education levels also vary by age, ethnicity and language; by the ages of children served (in centers, not homes); and by centers' and homes' public subsidy status.

### *Variation by Age and Ethnicity*

*Age.* Family child care providers' educational backgrounds do not vary by age. In contrast, more center teachers with BA or higher degrees are age 50 or older (25%) than teachers with AA degrees (16%) or teachers with less education (10%).

Table 3. *Educational Attainment of Licensed Family Child Care Providers and Center-Based Teachers, By Region*

| | Providers: High School Or Less | Providers: BA or Higher | Teachers: BA or Higher | Centers Employing At Least One Teacher With BA or Higher |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bay Area | 21% | 18% | 34% | 72% |
| Central California | 30% | 10% | 18% | 48% |
| Northern California | 22% | 12% | 25% | 53% |
| Southern California | 33% | 14% | 24% | 59% |
| Statewide | 29% | 14% | 25% | 60% |

Table 4. *Percentages of Providers and Teachers with a BA or Higher Degree, By Ethnicity, Compared to the Total Population of Providers and Teachers*

| | All licensed family child care providers | Licensed family child care providers with BA degree or higher | All center teachers | Center teachers with BA degree or higher |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| White, Non-Hispanic | 42% | 47% | 53% | 59% |
| Latina | 35% | 15% | 27% | 13% |
| African American | 15% | 17% | 7% | 6% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 5% | 16% | 8% | 15% |
| Other | 3% | 5% | 5% | 7% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

*Ethnicity*. Compared to the ethnic distribution of the licensed family child care provider population as a whole, White, Non-Hispanic, African American and Asian/Pacific Islander providers have attained a BA degree or higher at a higher rate, and Latina providers at a lower rate. Compared to the ethnic distribution of the center-based teacher population as a whole, White, Non-Hispanic and Asian/ Pacific Islander teachers have attained a BA or higher at a higher rate, African Americans at a proportionate rate, and Latinas at a lower rate.

Compared to California adults of their ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), licensed family child care providers of color have attained a BA or higher degree at a proportionate rate, and center-based teachers of color have attained such degrees at a higher rate, while White, Non-Hispanic providers and teachers have attained such degrees at a lower rate:

- Among African Americans: 16% of family child care providers, 22% of teachers, and 17% of California adults have a BA or higher
- Among Asian/Pacific Islanders: 41% of family child care providers, 48% of teachers, and 41% of California adults have a BA or higher
- Among Latinas/Latinos: 6% of providers, 13% of teachers, and 6% of California adults have a BA or higher
- Among White, Non-Hispanics: 15% of family child care providers, 28% of teachers, and 34% of California adults have a BA or higher.

### *Variation by Ages of Children Served and by Public Funding Status*

The most significant variations along these dimensions are the following:

*Age of Children Served*

- In centers serving both infants and preschoolers, 19% of teachers have a BA degree or higher; in centers serving preschoolers only, 29% of teachers have such a degree.
- Family child care providers do not vary in educational attainment according to age of children served.

*Public Funding Status*

- In centers with a CDE or Head Start contract, 28% of teachers have a BA or higher; in centers receiving public subsidy through vouchers, 20% have such a degree; in centers receiving no

public subsidy, 32%.
- Among licensed family child care providers caring for at least one child receiving child care subsidy, 57% participated in non-credit training during the past 12 months; among those caring for no such children, only 42% participated in such training.

## How well prepared are licensed providers and center teachers to serve young children who are dual language learners or who have special needs?

To answer this question, we measured the number of non-credit training hours and college credits that providers and center teachers had received.

### *Training and Coursework Related to Dual Language Learners*

In 2004, more than one-third of children entering public kindergarten in California were estimated to be dual language learners (California Department of Education, 2006), and it is likely that soon most young children in ECE programs will be dual language learners and/or live with family members who do not speak English. Yet very few members of California's ECE workforce have participated in non-credit training or college coursework related to dual language learning:

- Only 12% of licensed providers have received non-credit training, and only 7% have completed college coursework, in this subject;
- Only 39% of centers employ at least one teacher with relevant non-credit training, and only 30% employ at least one teacher with relevant college coursework.

### *Training and Coursework Related to Working with Children with Special Needs*

Over the last thirty years, ECE settings have become much more involved in providing services to children with special physical and developmental needs and/or disabilities, due to new understanding of and ability to identify developmental challenges, coupled with changes in federal law (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Much of the state's ECE workforce has participated in some level of professional development related to working with children with special needs – especially in programs serving at least one such child – largely because California law has provided funding for such training since 2000:

- 46% of licensed providers have received relevant non-credit training, and 19% have completed college coursework, in this subject;
- 74% of centers employ at least one teacher with relevant non-credit training, and 63% employ at least one teacher with relevant college coursework;
- Centers holding a contract with Head Start or CDE employ a higher percentage of teachers with relevant training or coursework.

# Reflections on Key Findings

## *Educational Attainment*

The varied educational profile of California's ECE workforce – with some home-based providers and center staff achieving college degrees, and others holding high school diplomas and/or completing a few college credits – largely reflects the relatively low standards currently set by California law, as well as the differing standards governing various types of ECE programs. But while educational attainment and professional preparation vary by type of program and by region of the state, it is notable that for much of the ECE workforce, current levels of education and training well exceed what the law requires. With respect to proposed increases in educational requirements for teachers in publicly funded preschool programs, a significant portion of the ECE workforce may find such new requirements within reach or may have already met them, while others may find it daunting to pursue this new opportunity.

Although regional variations in the overall educational attainment of the ECE workforce reflect patterns found among *all* adults in the state, they nevertheless require attention in order to address current disparities. Our data point to the need for varied strategies in targeting professional development resources; for example, current efforts to expand higher education offerings to more remote communities without college campuses, to utilize distance learning, and to engage community agencies in offering credit-bearing training, should be strengthened and expanded.

## *Workforce Diversity*

California's ECE workforce is much more ethnically and linguistically diverse than its K-12 public school teachers. But while this diversity is a promising foundation on which to revamp and expand services for young children, the comparison with K-12 teachers can also obscure the stratification by ethnicity that does exist in the ECE workforce. Our data reveal substantial divisions by ethnicity and language that require attention: most child care center directors are White, Non-Hispanic, for example, whereas most assistant teachers are women of color. Similarly, about one-half of assistant teachers and home-based providers can communicate with children in a language other than English, whereas this is true for only one-third of teachers and one-quarter of directors.

California's challenge will be to intentionally maintain and expand its ECE workforce diversity, hand in hand with continuing efforts to upgrade the knowledge and skills of this workforce – in particular, proposals to increase educational standards for teachers in publicly funded preschools. This can only be done by investing in a range of appropriate supports that will truly allow people from a wide spectrum of cultural, educational and financial backgrounds to access professional development opportunities. A proactive strategy will be essential, including scholarships, tutoring, conveniently scheduled and located classes, and resources for students learning English as a second language. The goal must extend beyond building a diverse workforce to ensuring that such diversity is well distributed across

all positions and all types of child care programs.

### *Recruitment and Retention*

Given the documented relationship between staffing stability and program quality (Helburn, 1995), the persistence of high turnover in California's ECE workforce is of serious concern. The earnings gap between kindergarten and ECE teachers, in particular, is likely to continue to fuel such turnover, particularly among those who have made the greatest investment in education and training. This study has also confirmed previous findings that the most educated segment of the center teacher workforce is older than the teacher population as a whole (Herzenberg, Price & Bradley, 2005). Teachers with a BA or higher degree are more likely than others to be over age 50 and approaching retirement, at a time when the demand is rising for teachers with such qualifications. This suggests that in addition to helping current members of the ECE workforce achieve college degrees, California needs a strategy to recruit college graduates to ECE teaching positions, including improvements in compensation, in order to make such employment more attractive to well-educated young candidates.

The age of the family child care workforce also raises questions about the supply of child care services in the future. Less than ten percent of licensed providers are under 30, underscoring the need for more proactive recruitment strategies than are now in place.

### *Preparation to Work with Dual Language Learners and/or Children with Special Needs*

Our data show that the vast majority of California's ECE workforce has not engaged in coursework or non-credit training related to dual language learning, largely because such training and coursework are not generally available. This finding highlights the need to update courses of study at California's training institutions, both college- and community-based, and to expand the pool of instructors who are knowledgeable about this subject (Whitebook, Bellm, Lee & Sakai, 2005).

By contrast – reflecting an intentional strategy backed by state resources – many more teachers in the state have received training or college coursework related to serving children with special needs. A similar effort around dual language learning is much needed. Additionally, more advanced coursework and training in these subjects must be offered if we hope to build an ECE workforce that is well prepared to meet the diverse needs of California's young children.

* * * * *

In the last five years, with the availability of more resources for children from birth to age five flowing through local and state First 5 Commissions and other sources, there has been a concerted effort to expand professional development opportunities for the early care and education workforce, and to make these offerings more relevant and accessible. In the process of expanding resources, however, many of the limitations of the state's current professional development infrastructure have become more visible.

Now, as California and various counties embark on creating publicly funded preschool programs, there is an opportunity to develop comprehensive state and local plans for professional development that are inclusive of teachers and providers in a variety of settings. As their foundation, such plans should reflect the latest information about what practitioners need to know and do in order to help children realize their potential.

This study has provided a snapshot of California's early care and education workforce, capturing current strengths and areas in need of improvement. It is to be hoped that future assessments will document great strides toward creating an even more diverse, culturally competent workforce, well prepared to meet the needs of California's young children.

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