Staff Recruitment and Retention

Recruiting and retaining highly-qualified professionals has been a long-standing challenge in early childhood education (ECE). Working in a historically low-paying field with limited to no benefits, ECE professionals are often unable to support themselves and/or a family and need to find a different job. Sometimes that means that highly-qualified ECE staff, upon completing a degree or certification program, moves to a K-12 setting where benefits and salary are much greater. Other times, it means that the professional leaves the ECE field altogether in search of greater compensation. With an ever-changing workforce, providing professional development is a vital—yet costly—endeavor, with no guarantee that the investment of time and money will result in retention of the newly prepared workforce.

In addition, young children require consistency of caregivers, settings, and experiences to have a strong foundation from which to grow and develop. Staff turnover or children moving from one program to another because of quality issues and/or staffing shortages means that young children do not have the benefit of that necessary consistency. Children's development and growth can be negatively affected when young children repeatedly start over with building new relationships or learning new environments and routines.

For the purpose of this resource, early childhood professionals are direct service staff, including family child care providers, teachers, directors, and home visitors, as well as other support staff serving children and families directly.

This document highlights some strategies for data collection on staff turnover, provides examples of state systems and policies in place to support the recruitment and retention of a highly-qualified workforce, and includes additional research and resources on the topic.

Strategies for Collecting Staff Turnover Data

To understand the breadth and depth of early childhood workforce recruitment and/or retention issues within a state or program, it is important to begin with an analysis of data related to staff retention. For many states, market rates surveys may have been the only mechanism in place for routinely gathering information from child care program though the data would be limited in scope. A more targeted focus around the calculation of staff turnover rates, existing data on child care staffing may be available to states through early childhood workforce registries and/or workforce studies. The accuracy and depth of information vary for each selected strategy.

Workforce registries typically track the start and end dates of staff for their tenure at specific early childhood programs, although the method and means of collecting data may vary, which can affect their accuracy. Workforce registries tend to rely on updates that are made either by the individual, through data entry or submission of renewal applications, or by program administrators who update staff information. Additionally, if registry data entry fields are not required, the opportunity to capture vital workforce data will be lost. Accuracy may be higher for registries where there is a high registration rate among the professionals in the respective state or territory. These percentages of registration, or saturation rates, vary depending on accessibility and cost to join a workforce registry. Registries with the highest saturation tend to have mandatory workforce participation for child care licensing purposes or for inclusion in a state's quality rating and improvement system or other child care quality improvement activities.

More robust data are missing from these rough estimates of staff turnover, including the reason for staff departure (e.g., gaining another position, enrolling as a full-time student, termination) and the destination point for departed

professionals. For example, these data do not show whether the professional has left his or her position within the child care program or whether he or she left the early childhood field. Head Start uses its Program Information Report (PIR) to collect data on teacher and home visitor turnover, using three reasons for leaving—compensation and benefits, pursuing another field of study, and other.

As registries' data collected over time continue to grow, and as data entry practices more often include quality controls, turnover will be more easily tracked and at a reduced level of effort. Regardless of the reason for workforce turnover, from the child's perspective, any change of staff has an impact. Workforce turnover is greatly associated with low wages of early care and ECE staff, as documented in Whitebook, Phillips, and Howes (2014). States/territories can draw upon similar research, as well as States' promising strategies mentioned here in this brief, to best support the recruitment, retention, and appropriate compensation of the early childhood workforce.

State/City Examples

Colorado

Colorado Department of Education. *Building a Great Early Childhood Workforce* [Fact sheet]. Denver, CO: Colorado Department of Education, 2015.

This fact sheet summarizes Colorado's early childhood professional development initiatives funded by a Race to the Top—Early Learning Challenge Grant in an effort to strengthen the effectiveness of the early childhood workforce by adopting an aligned, tiered set of performance-based competencies, collecting, and analyzing data about Colorado's early learning professionals and creating mechanisms of support.
http://ecpd.costartstrong.org/ets/companies/08c38354-7b3d-4abd-b1ca-8309d9c5b000/UserFiles/Great%20Workforce%20Fact%20Sheet%203.27.15.pdf

Connecticut

Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. *A Plan to Assist Early Education State Funded Providers to Degree Attainment and Increased Compensation,* Hartford, CT: Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, 2016.

This document summarizes Connecticut's efforts to recruit new staff based on legislated education qualification and to support the degree advancement of its existing workforce.
http://www.ct.gov/oec/lib/oec/OEC_Worforce_Report_Final_2.10.16.pdf

Massachusetts

Strategies for Children. *Strategies for Improving the Early Education and Care Workforce in Massachusetts,* Boston, MA: Strategies for Children, 2010.

This report is a complement to current efforts by the Executive Office of Education and the Massachusetts Departments of Early Education and Care (EEC) and Higher Education to further the professional development and higher education of early educators. It includes recommendations for developing a comprehensive statewide workforce development system based on two case studies of regional efforts in Springfield and Worcester to build and support comprehensive career pathways for early childhood educators in Massachusetts. It identifies challenges faced by early educators and provides a base for recommendations to address local, regional, and state functions

necessary for building and maintaining a statewide workforce development system.
http://www.strategiesforchildren.org/docs_research/10_SFC_ImprovingMAWorkforce_Report.pdf

Nebraska

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute Statewide Conference "Transforming the Early Childhood Workforce in Nebraska," 2015, October 5–6, Lincoln, NE.

The conference brought together educators from throughout the state to begin building a consensus around how to address Nebraska's early childhood workforce needs. Included here is the conference website with multiple resources, including a conference summary report.
http://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/our-work/workforce-development/transforming-the-early-childhood-work-force-conference

New York

Klinger, N., C. Paprocki, and A. Zellin. *New York State's Early Childhood Workforce: Challenges, Opportunities, and Next Steps,* n.d.

Prepared as a briefing paper for The Early Childhood Strategic Group and The Center for Early Care and Education, this policy paper outlines the opportunities, challenges, and next steps needed to address the barriers of teacher shortages, inadequate teacher preparation and professional development opportunities, and compensation and benefit disparities. It focuses particularly on the community-based organizations that provide a significant percentage of early education programs across New York state.
http://www.centerforchildrensinitiatives.org/images/earlychild_workforce.pdf

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Early Childhood Education Workforce Transformation Initiative (ECEWTI). *Early Childhood Education Teachers 2.0: Strategies to Transform the Profession. A Preliminary Report from the Early Childhood Education Workforce Transformation Initiative,* (2016).

This brief is the result of an effort to learn more about the ECE workforce in Philadelphia and to design strategies for realizing a teacher workforce fully qualified and of sufficient size to deliver quality ECE. ECEWTI collected data through online surveys, focus groups, interviews, case studies, secondary data analysis, and literature reviews. Data were collected about ECE employers, ECE staff, and ECE teacher preparation programs.
http://melc.org/wp-content/uploads/WPF-report-march-16_formatted2.pdf

Wisconsin

Gernetzke, E., D. Wolfe, D. Edie, and J. Paulson. *Attracting, Supporting and Retaining a Qualified Workforce* [pathways…To Early Childhood Higher Education: Policy brief 2]. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Council on Children and Families and the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association, Summer 2010.

This brief includes issues related to the challenges of attracting and retaining qualified ECE teachers, strategies to address the issues, and policy implications for Wisconsin.
http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/assets/Documents/Pathway-7.pdf

Related Research

Coffman, J., and M. Green, with C. Bruner, and Y. Daniel. (2010). *Reaching for Quality: Lessons from New Jersey on Raising Preschool Teacher Qualifications While Maintaining Workforce Diversity.* Boston, MA: The BUILD Initiative, 2010.

This brief is part of a series of resource briefs on equity and diversity in developing early learning systems and examines New Jersey's experiences in building a high-quality preschool system in high poverty school districts. http://www.buildinitiative.org/portals/0/uploads/documents/resource-center/diversity-and-equity-toolkit/ab-bottdiversitybrief.pdf

Huang, D., and J. Cho. "Using professional development to enhance staff retention." *Afterschool Matters,* Fall (2010), 9–16.

The data and research findings for this paper were derived from two studies. The first was commissioned to the National Afterschool Partnership by the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate effective practices at the 21st Century Community Learning Centers to develop resources and professional development tools related to the establishment and sustainability of afterschool programs nationwide. The second study, the Extension Study, was set up to further evaluate how effective programs retain high-quality staff members. http://niost.org/pdf/afterschoolmatters/asm_2010_12_fall/asm_2010_12_fall-2.pdf

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (L. Allen and B. B. Kelly, eds.). Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2015.

The current state of the care and education workforce for children birth through age 8 is fragmented. Despite a shared objective of nurturing and securing the future success of young children, early care and education professionals across a variety of settings are not acknowledged as a cohesive workforce. They work in disparate systems, and the expectations and requirements for their preparation and credentials have not kept pace with what the science of child development and early learning indicates children need. This report offers a blueprint for action to connect what is known about how to support children to what is done in the settings where children grow and develop. https://www.fcd-us.org/transforming-workforce-children-birth-age-eight-unifying-foundation/

Kilpatrick, J. A *White Paper for the Missouri Coordinating Board for Early Childhood.* Boston, MA: Public Consulting Group, 2012.

This white paper presents the broad approaches to improving compensation and identifies recommended strategies for increasing awareness about low child-care wages. The paper indicates that the greatest challenge to addressing low compensation is developing proposals that are realistic, can be implemented, and will result in measurable successes. Two broad approaches are presented: (1) raising wages directly; and (2) launching campaigns to affect wages by more indirect means, such as unionizing/organizing the early childhood workforce. https://dss.mo.gov/cbec/pdf/early-childhood-workforce-compensation.pdf

LeMoine, S. Workforce Designs: *A Policy Blueprint for State Early Childhood Professional Development Systems* [NAEYC Public Policy Report], Washington, DC: NAEYC, 2008.
This blueprint focuses on the policies that connect professional development activities and that support and make possible effective implementation of a state system of professional development. It highlights principles and six policy areas that build or sustain an integrated system in all settings in which early childhood professionals work. These principles and highlighted policy areas are aimed at the development and retention of a competent and stable

early childhood workforce—a skilled cadre of effective, diverse, and adequately compensated professionals.
http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/policy/ecwsi/Workforce_Designs.pdf

Muller, E. *Recruitment, Hiring, Training and Retention for Preschool Children with Disabilities: State Approaches.* Project Forum at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2010.

This policy analysis describes state-level efforts to recruit, hire, train, and retain highly qualified personnel for preschool children with disabilities.
http://nasdse.org/DesktopModules/DNNspot-Store/ProductFiles/84_a9d5fa06-4c60-4243-805f-0df2a7444d53.pdf

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). *High-Quality Early Childhood Educators Are the Key to Quality Programs for Children,* Washington, DC: NAEYC, n.d.

This document includes facts about the ECE workforce and recommendations for ways to utilize current regulations to develop a highly-qualified workforce.
https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/201NAEYC_Childhood%20Educators.pdf

National Survey of Early Care and Education. *Characteristics of Home-Based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education* [OPRE Report 2016-13]. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March 2016.

This technical report uses data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education to provide nationally representative estimates of all home-based care to children from birth through 5 years old. NSECE data can describe each person who provides regular home-based care, including characteristics such as education and revenue from early care and education activities.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/characteristics_of_home_based_early_care_and_education_too-pre_032416.pdf

Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) [OPRE Report 2013-38]. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013.

This brief provides a nationally representative portrait of ECE teachers and caregivers working directly with young children in center-and home-based settings. It reports data from the National Survey of Early Care and Education, an integrated set of four nationally representative surveys collecting information from individuals and programs providing early care and education in center-based and home-based settings to children from birth through 5 years old. It includes information on the educational attainment, experience, and wages of center-based teachers and caregivers.
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nsece_wf_brief_102913_0.pdf

Ochshorn, S. *Forging a New Framework for Professional Development: A Report on "The Science of Professional Development in Early Childhood Education: A National Summit."* Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE, 2011.

This document is a report from a National Summit, looking at the knowledge about effective professional development and evidence-based practices that promote school readiness and academic success as well as models of professional development that are emerging throughout the country. It includes a series of policy recommendations

for strengthening the early childhood workforce.
https://www2.ed.gov/programs/eceducator/forging.pdf

Pacchiano, D., R. Klein, and M. S. Hawley. *Reimagining Instructional Leadership and Organizational Conditions for Improvement: Applied Research Transforming Early Education.* Chicago, IL: Ounce of Prevention Fund, 2016.

This paper focuses on work with early childhood program leaders and details why program leaders must become instructional leaders and critical partners in teachers' daily professional development; what can be drawn from established bodies of research to specify the foundational knowledge and competencies of instructional leadership and instructional improvement; how a leadership development framework can be implemented; and what was learned about the power and promise of this approach for transforming early education settings into organizations that support powerful learning and sustained improvement.
https://www.theounce.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/EssentialSupportsForImprovingEarlyEducationInstruc-tionalLeadership.pdf

Schilder, D. *Early Childhood Teacher Education Policies: Research Review and State Trends.* New Brunswick, NJ: Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, 2016.

This paper provides policymakers with a review of published research on ECE workforce education and credentials as well as research on the status of ECE wages, recruitment and retention challenges, and promising practices. It summarizes trends in state requirements regarding ECE teachers with bachelor's degrees and specialized certification, licensure, or endorsements of pre-K teachers. Examples of state funding sources and strategies to increase the percentage of ECE teachers with bachelor's degrees and ECE credentials are included. Moreover, the paper describes promising practices employed by some states designed to retain educated and credentialed ECE teachers. The paper concludes with recommended actions and strategies, based on research and state suggestions, regarding approaches that states can use to recruit and retain teachers with bachelor's degrees and ECE credentials.
http://ceelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/ceelo_policy_report_ec_teach_education_policies_final_for_web_2016_04.pdf

Whitebook, M. *Building a Skilled Teacher Workforce: Shared and Divergent Challenges in Early Care and Education and in Grades K-12.* Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment Institute for Research on Labor and Employment University of California, Berkeley, 2014.

In an effort to understand the personnel-related opportunities and challenges the ECE sector faces, this paper begins with the public perception of early childhood teaching, followed by a brief discussion of the history and purpose of education for children of different ages. Next, the paper describes key features of the personnel systems that have emerged from these varied roots, comparing them along several dimensions, and concludes with suggestions for promoting a skilled and stable early care and education workforce for the 21st century.
http://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2014/Building-a-Skilled-Teacher-Workforce_September-2014_9-25.pdf

Whitebook, M., Phillips, & Howes, C. (2014). *Worthy work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study.* Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.
http://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2014/ReportFINAL.pdf

National Center on Child Care Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives. *Strengthening the Early Childhood and School-Age Workforce: A Tool to Improve Workplace Conditions, Compensation, and Access to Professional Development,* Washington, DC: Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care and Office of Head Start, 2014.

This tool highlights strategies that combine supports for positive workplace conditions, increased compensation, and access to professional development for the early childhood and school-age workforce. Focusing on these three issues as part of a professional development system requires decision makers to examine available funding and consider how to best package, stage, and target investments to meet state/territory goals for the early childhood and school-age workforce. Policymakers and programs can pilot promising practices, move them to scale, and sustain them as part of a state/territory-aligned professional development system. These efforts will benefit the workforce and enhance services to young children and their families.

https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/strengtheningworkforce_tool.pdf

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