

# Workforce Development and Quality Preschool




Marcy Whitebook, Ph.D.  
Center for the Study of Child Care  
Employment, University of  
California at Berkeley




# Staff as Key to Quality

- Quality ultimately boils down to the quality of the relationship between the child and the teacher
- Better relationships between children and teachers are fostered by:
  - Teacher education and training
  - Teacher stability
  - Teacher compensation




# What makes an effective preschool teacher?

- Provides ample verbal and cognitive stimulation
- Interacts sensitively and responsively
- Gives generous amounts of attention and support
- Knows how to construct an environment and present activities that enhance and build upon child's learning
- Knowledgeable about culture and traditions of children and able to communicate with children and families




# What specific skills do teachers need?

- Keen observation and assessment skills based on child development knowledge
- Ability to construct developmentally appropriate environment and activities
- Practiced in age appropriate classroom management
- Understands adult communication and learning
- Knows inclusion strategies
- Aware of family support resources
- Familiarity with cultural tradition and practices of children in program
- Understands needs of children for whom English is a second language
- Second language facility




# What education and training is necessary for teachers?

- Subject of much discussion, largely because decisions state make will drive:
  - cost per child
  - demands on higher education system
  - costs of workforce development




# What education and training is necessary for teachers? Cont.

- Research on early care and education center-based settings over the last fifteen years:
  - More higher education and specialized training is better
  - Most effective teachers have at least a four-year degree and specialized training in early childhood education
    - Produces teacher behaviors consistent with high quality programs which support better developmental outcomes for children
    - Alternative pathways to effective teaching require intensive mentoring and supervision which may be as costly as formal education




# What education and training is necessary for teachers? Cont

- Research on publicly-funded preK
  - New Jersey: Highest quality programs were those operated by school districts which employ considerably higher percentage of BA level teachers
  - Similar findings: MA, GA, awaiting six state plus study findings



# Concerns about raising standards

- Size of task
- Potential for adding another layer of confusion
- No preschool credential in place
- No guarantee that education would be linked to better compensation
- Access issues to higher education could exclude particular groups of practitioners




# Nontraditional Student Population

- Low-income
- Over 25 years old
- Employed full-time
- Parents
- Many non-native English speakers
- Many with limited literacy in English and/or any language




# Higher Education System Concerns

- Budget crisis: additional resources needed to maintain, let alone create and/or expand
- Challenges of communication among the three layers of higher education
- Four year colleges do not have programs in place
- Students siphoned into early elementary



# What other kinds of supports do teachers need?

- Supervised Practicum
- Ongoing Mentoring and Supervision
- Community of colleagues
  - Among other early childhood teachers in centers
  - Among teachers of older children and principals
- Adequate compensation and benefits



# How states can ensure preschool teachers are of high quality?

- Complex interplay of standards, delivery system, and compensation
  - Standards: States vary, about half set at least at BA level. Typically higher than child care.
  - Delivery Systems: States vary, some public school only, some privately operated as well. Teaching staff in publicly-operated preK programs have higher educational qualifications than staff in privately-operated programs.
  - Compensation: Teaching staff in publicly-operated preK receive higher pay and benefits than teaching staff in privately-operated programs.
  - Turnover: There is greater teaching staff stability in publicly-operated than in privately-operated programs.



## How states can ensure preschool teachers are of high quality?

- Competencies well defined and aligned with higher education and certification system
- Higher education system supported to provide programming
- Menu of supports in place to ensure access among diverse populations



# Supports needed

## ■ Classes:

- Nontraditional hours
- Community locations
- Conducted in languages other than English
- ESL supports
- Literacy supports

## ■ Finances

- Assistance with transportation, child care and books
- Assistance with tuition
- Substitutes

## ■ Counseling


## ■ Mentoring

## ■ Practicum



# Policy Options for Workforce Development

- Workforce development integrated into cost of service includes:
  - Clarification of skills and competencies
  - Alignment of skills and competencies, coursework, certification
  - Establish partnerships among all levels of higher education and provide resources for planning and development of new programs to meet needs for teachers and leaders in the field, articulation as well



# Policy Options for Workforce Development, cont.

- Provide scholarships for tuition, books
- Target scholarships and provide appropriate supports:
  - Young people entering field
  - Existing workforce to upgrade skills
  - Culturally and linguistically diverse workforce
- Consider impact of policies on entire workforce, do no harm.



# Strengthen infrastructure

- Centralize information for individual career planning and resource planning on professional development, accredited training, certification, incentives, counseling
- Build on existing efforts



# Research

- Identify workforce characteristics, including most efficient and cost-effective pathways of training that lead to improved practice
- How? Collect baseline data, explore administrative data and support other research to answers questions about costs and effectiveness




# Develop Vision for Workforce

- Current ECE workforce is diverse with respect to ethnicity, language and education
- Create preschool workforce that maintains the diversity while increasing education and professional skills
- Include all who work with young children in vision for preschool



# Possibilities and challenges

- Opportunity to address long-standing problems in field that shortchange children and workforce in the present
- Lever for change and quality improvement throughout system
- Workforce and infrastructure costs part of price tag for UPK
- Workforce issues not an add-on but essential to success of effort



# Resources

- Trust for Early Education  
<http://www.trustforearlyed.org/>
- National Institute for Early Education Research <http://nieer.org/faq/>
- National Center for Early Development and Learning <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/>
- California First Five Commission  
<http://www.ccfc.ca.gov/>



# Resources, cont.

- *Universal Preschool in California: An Overview of Workforce Issues* by Dan Bellm and Marcy Whitebook, April 2003
- *Early Education Quality: Higher Teacher Qualifications for Better Learning Environments - A Review of the Literature* by Marcy Whitebook, Summer 2003
- <http://www.iir.berkeley.edu/cscce/index.html>