

Boston EQUIP

Boston Early Education Quality Improvement Project

1999 Neighborhood Profiles: Dorchester*

DEMOGRAPHICSⁱ

Dorchester is Boston's largest neighborhood by population and area. It is often distinguished by its sub-neighborhoods and its geographic features (i.e., Meeting House Hill, Savin Hill, and Columbia Point). While it is characterized as one of the poorest

<i>Total Population:</i>	85,806	<i>Median Income:</i>	\$29,892
<i>Population under 18 years old:</i>	22,819	<i>Percent in Poverty:</i>	17.9%
8.3% Age 0-4	7,124	<i>Percent of Youth in Poverty:</i>	29.1%
18.1% Age 5-17	15,495	<i>Unemployment Rate:</i>	9.9%
<i>Racial/Ethnic Diversity:</i>		<i>Highest Educational Attainment:</i>	
4.2% Asian		29.7% Less Than 12th Grade	
34.5% Black		33.4% High School Graduate	
10.3% Hispanic		20.0% Some College	
0.4% Native American		16.9% College Graduate	
51.8% White			
9.2% Other			

neighborhoods in Boston, Dorchester is rich in resources. These include affordable housing stock, access to downtown Boston, strong churches, a wide array of youth and teen programs, and a variety of English as Second Language and high school diploma equivalency programs. Though the neighborhood is racially and ethnically diverse, the population has been in decline since the 1970s.ⁱⁱ

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Capacityⁱⁱⁱ

Type of Program	Total Capacity
Center & Head Start Programs (CHS)	1755
Licensed School-Age Programs (SACC)	633
Family Child Care Programs (FCC)	1186

Capacity by Age Group	
CHS	
Infant	69
Toddler	248
Preschool	1438
SACC	
Elementary School	367
Middle School	197

Waitlists

Demand for child care combined with limitations on capacity often result in long waitlists. **The average number of children on a waitlist at individual Centers and Head Start programs in Dorchester is 44; for School-Age Child Care the average is 45. Family Child Care providers who reported a waitlist had an average of 3 children on their waitlists.** Citywide, these numbers are 62, 10, and 5 respectively. In June 1999, approximately 1,208 of Dorchester's children were on the waitlist for a state Office of Child Care Service (OCCS) subsidy.

Subsidies

Subsidies often provide access to child care for families who cannot afford to pay full rates. **Per program, the total number of children in Dorchester who use subsidies for Center and Head Start, School-Age Child Care, and Family Child Care are 43, 37, and 3 respectively.** Citywide, these numbers are 38, 30, and 2 respectively.

ACCREDITATION^{iv}

Accreditation is often used as an indicator of the quality in a child care program. **In this neighborhood, three Centers and Head Start programs are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), three family child care providers are accredited by the National Association of Family Childcare (NAFCC), and at least one has received her Child Development Associate’s credential.**

	Dorchester	Boston	EQUIP Benchmark
CHS	6%	16%	25%
FCC	2%	10%	25%

TRAINING

Research shows that the quality of programs is directly related to the education and training of their staff.^v Specialized early childhood training for caregivers helps make the most of children’s developmental potential. **In Dorchester, 46% of Center and Head Start staff had received college training in the last year at the time of the EQUIP survey; 59% of all FCC providers had received college training; and 43% of SACC group leaders had received college level training.**

Additionally, a significant number of the neighborhood’s early childhood professionals have obtained college degrees. **Those who have obtained a BA or more include: 18% of CHS teachers and lead teachers; 52% of SACC group leaders and senior group leaders; and 14% of FCC providers.**

	Staff Receiving College Credit		
	Dorchester	Boston	EQUIP Benchmark
CHS	46%	41%	43%
SACC	22% ^{vi}	50%	43%
FCC	59%	57%	43%

	Staff with BA or more	
	Dorchester	Boston
CHS	18%	29%
SACC	52%	55%
FCC	14%	12%

PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Parents play a significant role in the education of their children. Many programs encourage opportunities for parents and providers to work together not only in activities inside the classroom like assisting teachers or participating in celebrations, but in the leadership of the program through activities like hiring staff, evaluating programs, and serving on governing boards. **Averaging the parent engagement on a number of activities, an overall score indicates 27% of parents are involved in center and Head Start programs in Dorchester; 21% of parents are involved in School-Age Child Care; and 24% of parents are involved in Family Child Care.** Each of the programs parent participation is higher than the citywide average, yet none exceed the EQUIP benchmark.

	Average Parent Engagement		
	Dorchester	Boston	EQUIP Benchmark
CHS	27%	26%	50%
SACC	21%	16%	50%
FCC	24%	17%	50%

Top Three Parent Engagement Activities	
CHS	
Celebrations, Holidays, Festivals	57%
Parent/Teacher Conferences	37%
Fundraising	31%
SACC	
Parent/Teacher Conferences	66%
Celebrations, Holidays, Festivals	53%
Program Evaluation	42%
FCC	
Playing with Children	76%
Celebrations, Holidays, Festivals	47%
Fundraising	37%

SALARIES

Teacher and Provider Hourly Wage

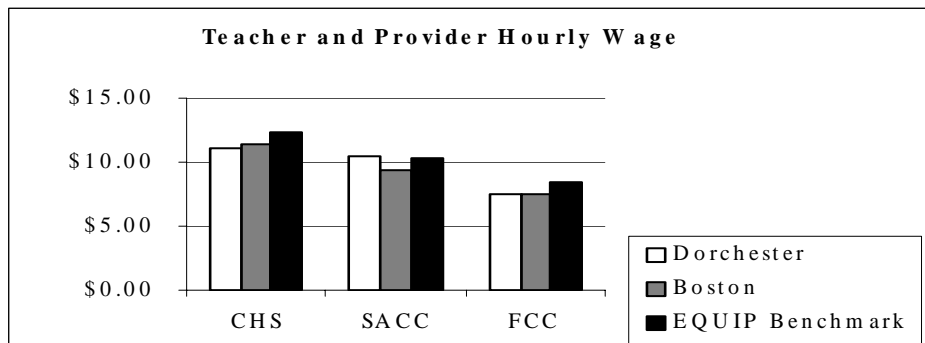
Low salaries are often linked with high staff turnover and lower quality child care.

Higher salaries generally correlate with higher levels of education, professional training, and a commitment to staff

retention. **The average hourly wages for**

CHS, SACC, and FCC in Dorchester are \$11.03, \$10.48, and \$7.51 respectively. SACC and FCC exceed the citywide average hourly wage, but SACC is the only program where hourly wage exceeds the EQUIP benchmark.

	Dorchester	Boston	EQUIP Benchmark
CHS	\$11.03	\$11.32	\$12.40
SACC	\$10.48	\$9.41	\$10.35
FCC	\$7.51	\$7.47	\$8.46



Benefits and Health Care

Another indicator of a program's commitment to its staff is the level of benefits offered. **33% of center and Head Start programs, and 75% of school-age programs responding in Dorchester did not offer health care coverage to full-time employees. 45% of family child care providers do not have health coverage either through their own business or through another individual.**

Turnover

Continuous changes in personnel limit efforts to build stable environments and relationships for children and their families. **CHS and SACC programs reported average annual staff turnover rates of 15 and 35 percent respectively.**

The average staff turnover for CHS and SACC are lower than the citywide rates.

	Dorchester	Boston
CHS	15%	23%
SACC	35%	56%

FACILITIES

Physical environment is important in a program's ability to deliver quality care. A safe, well-maintained, inviting, and well-designed environment contributes to physical, emotional, and cognitive development in children.

Closures

Program closures due to unforeseen circumstances such as building problems place a burden on parents to seek alternative child care while providers potentially face lost revenue and the prospect of

losing families. In addition, closures due to facility problems are an indicator of the need for repairs and general maintenance. **Five out of 30 centers, and four out of 12 School-Age Child Care programs reported having to close at least once in the past year.**

Expand, Relocate, Renovate

When Centers and Head Start programs were asked if they would like to expand, renovate, or relocate, 21 (70%) wanted to expand, 25 (83%) wanted to renovate, and 14 (47%) wanted to relocate.

	Dorchester	Boston
Expand	70%	63%
Renovate	83%	78%
Relocate	47%	39%

Computers

There are various software packages designed for young children. Caregivers can selectively choose appropriate material to help children acquire basic cognitive skills. Furthermore, computers can perform a variety of administrative tasks like budgeting or planning. **23**

- Top Three Computer Uses**
- Word Processing
 - In the Classroom with Children
 - Fiscal Management

(76.7%) of the Centers, 10 (83.3%) School-Age Child Care programs, and nine (40.9%) of the Family Child Care providers reported owning and using a computer.

What is Boston EQUIP?

The purpose of the Boston Early Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP) is to measure and help improve quality for the 25,000 children and families that use Boston’s public and private early childhood and school age care and education programs. In the Spring of 1999, Boston EQUIP surveyed licensed center-based, Head Start and Boston Public School early childhood programs, school-age child care programs, and a representative sample of licensed family child care providers. A total of 264 of Boston’s early childhood and school-age programs returned surveys.

For more information, contact Boston EQUIP at 617-695-0700 x229.

© Boston EQUIP, Associated Day Care Services (now Associated Early Care and Education), January 2000

* Unless otherwise identified, all data is from 1999 Boston EQUIP Third Inventory. Analysis by Alyssa Na'im. Return rates in Dorchester were: 45% for CHS; 53% for SACC; and 39% for FCC.

ⁱ Statistics are from Rolf Goetze. *Facts about Boston’s Neighborhoods: 16 Neighborhoods and 69 Neighborhood Statistical Areas.* February 1995.

ⁱⁱ From *A United Way Neighborhood View.* United Way of Massachusetts Bay

ⁱⁱⁱ School-age capacity numbers are projected from 1999 Boston EQUIP data. All other capacity numbers are from the Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services 1998 licensing records.

^{iv} CHS Accreditation is from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. FCC Accreditation and CDA numbers are from the National Association for Family Child Care.

^v Suzanne W. Helburn (editor). *Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers.* June 1995.

^{vi} This is the average of assistant group leaders and group leaders.