

Boston EQUIP

Boston Early Education Quality Improvement Project

Committee Report: Public Policy and Education (Community Profiles 2001 Data)

Associated Early Care and Education, Inc. (formerly Associated Day Care Services) and a community-based advisory of early care and education providers, advocates, and policymakers established Boston EQUIP in 1995 in an effort to improve the quality of early care and education services in Boston. After completing its first survey of licensed center-based child care, family child care, public pre-school programs, and after-school programs, Boston EQUIP's advisory established a set of five benchmarks for quality improvement in the areas of accreditation, facilities, teacher education and training, teacher salaries, and parent engagement. Since that time, Boston EQUIP has surveyed Boston's licensed early care and education school-age child care programs three times – in 1997, 1999, and most recently in the winter of 2000-2001.

The following report summarizes the findings of the 2000-2001 survey related to public policy, public education, and advocacy activities:

Participation in Advocacy Activities

- ◆ Among those responding to the Boston EQUIP survey, 30% of center and Head Start directors and 38% of family child care providers reported that they had attended or organized a legislative breakfast or lunch in the previous twelve months.
- ◆ 23% of center directors said they had invited legislators into their programs, or to events at their programs. The same proportion had taken parents or children to the State House. About 19% of family child care providers had taken parents or children to the State House.
- ◆ More than twice as many center and Head Start directors – 52% -- had made an effort to reach legislators through telephone calls or by writing letters. Respondents were not asked specifically about electronic communication (email). This compares to 76% of family child care providers who said they had made phone calls or written letters to legislators within the past year.
- ◆ Programs are not engaging in public education and public policy advocacy on their own. Almost half of the center and Head Start respondents (47%) and 35% of family child care providers said they networked with other organizations on advocacy. Only 18%, however, reported that they had worked with the business community on child care initiatives. More than twice as many family child care providers (38%) reported that they had worked with the business community.

- ◆ Approximately 14% of center or Head Start directors had participated in media coverage of Early Childhood Education, compared to only 3% of family child care providers..
- ◆ On average, programs reported that approximately 12% of their parents participated in advocacy efforts to increase and enhance early care and education.

Urgent Public Policy Issues

- ◆ Not surprisingly, Boston's center and Head Start directors overwhelmingly selected staffing compensation as the most pressing public policy issue from a list of 12 options. Staffing qualification was deemed the second most urgent issue, but was only rated at about half the urgency level of compensation.
- ◆ Other top concerns for center and Head Start directors (in order of urgency) were: state reimbursement rates; more income eligible subsidies; the quality of care in the community; and the availability of infant and toddler care.
- ◆ Family child care providers identified health insurance benefits as the most pressing public policy issues. Other top issues included income eligible subsidies and state reimbursement rates.

For more information contact Associated Early Care and Education Boston EQUIP, 617-695-0700, x229, or go to www.AssociatedEarlyCareAndEducation.org.