

Demographics of Boston's Early Care and Education Workforce

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February 2007

Introduction

A national movement is underway to reset the minimum education requirement for preschool teachers to a Bachelor's degree – primarily in response to research linking teacher education levels to the quality of early care and education classrooms and to child outcomes.¹ Efforts here in Boston to promote the professional development of our early care and education labor force are hindered however, by the significant absence of basic and objective information about the demographics of the workforce.

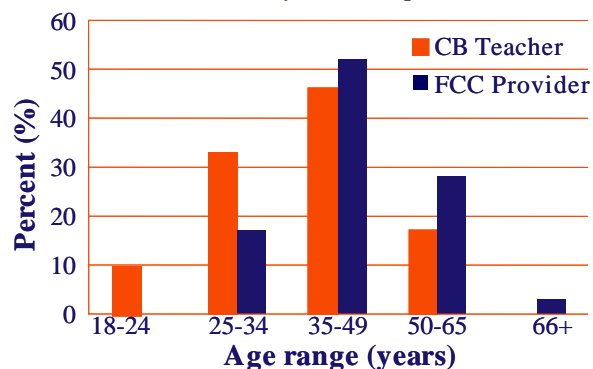
Only through a documented understanding of who characterizes Boston's early care and education workforce can we develop a comprehensive systemic plan for an achievable pathway. Toward this end, this brief summarizes Boston early care and education (ECE) workforce demographic data obtained by analyzing the most recent Community Profiles Teacher Survey. See page 5 for more details on the Methods.

What are the Characteristics of Boston's Early Care & Education Workforce?

Age and Gender

At the time of the surveys, community-based center teachers in Boston were 38 years old on average, ranging in age from 20 to 64 years, and were primarily female (97%). Family child care providers (FCC providers) were older and mostly fell in the 35-49 year old range (52%). None reported that they were younger than 25 years. Figure 1 shows the age distribution of center-based teachers compared to the FCC providers, with the latter group being slightly older than the former.

Figure 1. Distribution of age ranges of center-based teachers and family child care providers



Source: Community Profiles 2003-2004 Teacher and Community Profiles 2003-2004 Family Child Care Provider surveys

¹ Vandell, D.L. & B. Wolfe. (2000). "Child Care Quality: Does It Matter and Does It Need to Be Improved?" [Institute for Research on Poverty Special Report no. 78](#). Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin.

77% of Boston's community-based ECE teachers and 86% of family child care providers describe themselves as non-White

Race/Ethnicity

Forty-two percent of FCC providers reported their race/ethnicity as Hispanic, whereas 14% reported race/ethnicity as Caucasian (non-Hispanic). This distribution differs from center-based teachers, who reported their race/ethnicity as White (33%), Black (31%), and Latino/Hispanic (25%).

The race/ethnicity of community-based teachers is comparable to that of children in center-based programs², as shown in Table 1. Unfortunately, data is lacking to allow a similar comparison between children receiving care in family child care homes and their providers.

Table 1. Reported ethnicity/race of family child care providers, center-based teachers, and children served in center-based programs

	FCC Providers (%)	CB Teachers (%)	Children in CB programs (%)
Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	14	33	25
Hispanic	42	25	22
Black (non-Hispanic)	36	31	38
American Indian / Alaska Native	1	1	0
Asian / Pacific Islander	3	3	7
Biracial or multiracial	1	3	6
Other / Unable to determine	3	4	3

Languages Spoken

In the Teacher survey, the respondents were asked whether they teach in a language other than English. Seventy-two percent responded that they did not, 4% indicated that all instruction was conducted in a language other than English, and 24% responded that instruction was multi-lingual,

including English and another language. In family child care, English was reportedly the most commonly spoken language (63%), followed by Spanish (29%). A few providers also spoke French, Haitian-Creole, Vietnamese (2%), Chinese, Portuguese, and Arabic (1%).

² Child data obtained from the Community Profiles 2003-2004 Center/Head Start survey and was reported by Director or other survey respondent.

Levels of Education

Eleven percent of Assistant Teachers, 21% of Teachers, and 37% of Lead Teachers have obtained Bachelor degrees or higher. Table 2 shows the continuum of educational achievement of early care and education teachers in Boston.

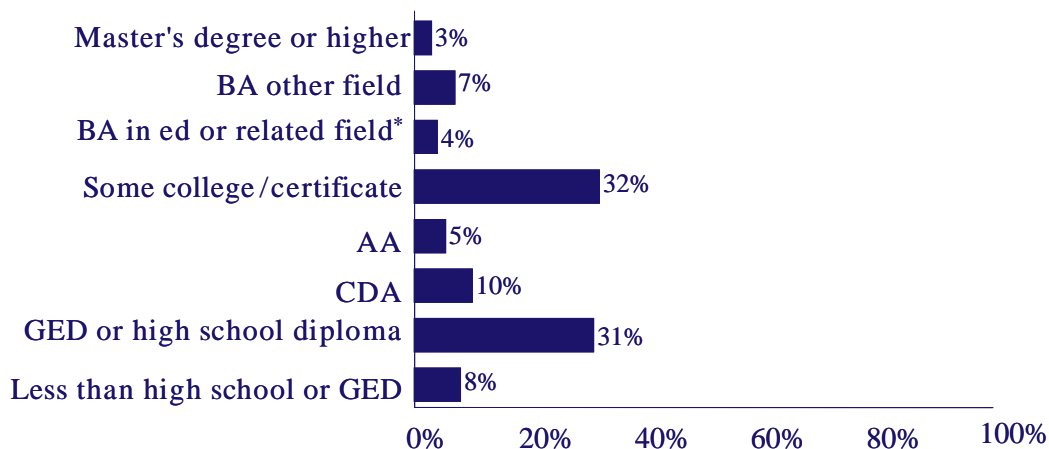
Fourteen percent of the FCC provider survey respondents reported obtaining Bachelor degrees or higher. Family child care providers also fall along the educational continuum, as seen in Figure 2.

Table 2. Boston Community-Based Center and Head Start Staff Highest Education Level Achieved

	Assistant Teachers (%)	Teachers (%)	Lead Teachers (%)	Directors (%)
Less than HS or GED	9	2	0	0
GED or HS	72	46	23	10
CDA	2	13	14	2
AA	5	18	27	17
BA in ed or related*	3	15	23	27
BA in unrelated	7	3	2	9
MA ed or related*	1	3	12	28
MA unrelated	0	0	0	2
Advanced/prof	0	0	0	3

*Related fields include: elementary education, child development, child study, child psychology, and social work.
 Source: Community Profiles 2003-2004 Center/Head Start Survey

Figure 2. Boston Family Child Care Providers' Highest Education Levels



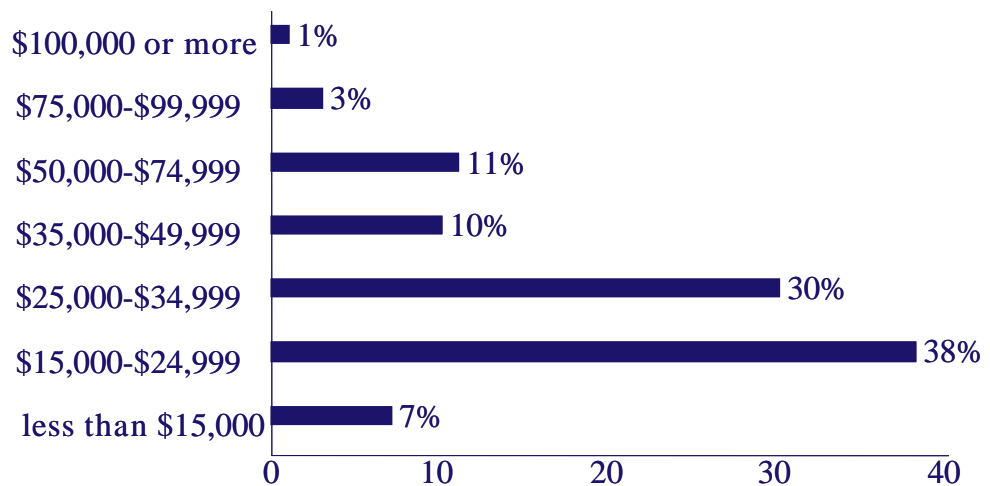
*Related fields include: elementary education, child development, child study, child psychology, and social work.
 Source: Community Profiles 2003-2004 Family Child Care Survey

Salary and Income

Sixty-two percent of center-based teacher respondents indicated that they were the primary wage earners in their home, and 22% noted working an additional paid job. The reported average weekly pay, before taxes, was \$517.00. Figure 3 depicts the distribution of family income for teachers. Seventy-five percent of the

teachers responded that their total family income (before taxes) was less than \$35,000, or below 53% of the 2003 state median income³ for a family of three.⁴ Approximately 7% of the respondents indicated that their family income levels fell below the 2003 Federal Poverty Level.

Figure 3. Total family income (before taxes)



75% of Boston's community-based ECE teachers are low-income.

Coursework Needs of the ECE Workforce

If not a degree, which courses do the ECE workforce need yet to earn their degrees? It is difficult to answer this question, especially as ECE teachers are not mandated to report this information. The closest answers we have for Boston come from two clusters of the Boston CPC Council. The Dorchester and Jamaica Plain/Roxbury clusters each have a

database, that individually tracks teacher's coursework needs. The Dorchester cluster collects data at courses they offer. The cluster also annually surveys members about their coursework needs. The Jamaica Plain/Roxbury cluster prints blank pages from their database and distributes them to directors at cluster meetings.

³Median income is the income level at which half of the population's income is higher and half is lower. State-median-income levels for 2003 were calculated using the National Center for Children in Poverty's web-based Income Converter, found on their website at www.nccp.org/income_converter_nopop.html.

⁴State-median income values were calculated based on a family of three, as this was the average number of children and adults reportedly living in the homes of respondents.

Coursework Needs (con't.)

Directors bring the forms back to their teachers and once completed submit them to the Cluster Lead Agent. Both clusters have gathered information on a small sample of the teachers in their neighborhood (less than 10%), and at the time of this brief one of the databases was unusable due to technological difficulties. However, each cluster has used the information to begin discussing which courses their local

workforce need, and both clusters are encouraging of creating such a database.

At the state-level, a voluntary registry was launched online early November 2006, and may become a helpful resource. We urge the Boston ECE workforce to participate in this key initiative.

Methods

In 2003-2004, Boston EQUIP administered the series of the Community Profiles surveys, including the Center/Head Start survey, the Family Child Care survey, the Public School survey, and the Teacher survey. The data were collected in the winter and spring of 2004. The demographic data about Boston's ECE workforce come primarily from the Teacher survey.

The sample of teachers surveyed was derived from the list of licensed community-based center and Head Start programs in Boston. At the time of the survey, Boston Public School teachers were working-to-rule, and therefore were not available to participate in the survey. Family child care providers received the Family Child Care survey in lieu of the Teacher Survey. A sample of approximately 300 teachers was desired. To this end, 60 community-based center and Head Start programs were randomly selected from the (former) Office for Child Care Services licensing list for Boston.

Teachers from the 60 community-based centers and Head Start programs either completed the survey by mail or in-person. In the former, the surveys were mailed to the center directors, who were responsible for distributing the surveys to the teachers. Upon completion, the teachers mailed the surveys back to Boston

EQUIP. In the latter case, members of the Leadership Empowerment Action Program (LEAP) class visited the programs and interviewed the teachers to complete the survey. The Boston Child Care Alliance supervised the LEAP class members during the survey collection. Four raffle prizes were offered as incentive for completing the surveys.

Surveys were distributed to 420 teachers and 127 were completed, a response rate of 30%. The response rates were similar between the teachers visited by the LEAP class and the surveys sent via mail.

Additional sources of demographic information for the purposes of this report were the Center/Head Start and Family Child Care Community Profiles 2003-2004 surveys. The Center/Head Start survey was originally sent to all licensed Boston community-based and Head Start centers. From these 211 centers, 117 surveys were returned, for a response rate of 55%. The Family Child Care survey was sent to 321 providers. This number represented a stratified random sample of the 532 "active" family child care providers. A total of 146 surveys were returned, resulting in a response rate of 45%.

The members of Boston's ECE workforce are 'non-traditional students' as they embark upon post-secondary education

Limitations

There are certain limitations to the use of survey methodology in general, and to the Community Profiles 2003-2004 Teacher survey specifically. In particular, a response rate of 30% for a survey is relatively low and limits the generalizability of findings. Another limitation of survey methodology is that the data may be biased toward those

individuals who respond to the survey. However, these limitations must be viewed in context of the information provided, in that none of the findings from the survey are particularly controversial and that they are fairly consistent with national results, yet capture the diversity of an urban center, like Boston.

Summary

Although our sample of Boston's early care and education workforce is relatively small, it is consistent with anecdotes about who is caring for our youngest citizens. Based on the survey findings, the characteristics of this workforce, are primarily female with an average age of 38 years, low-income, and ethnically and linguistically diverse.

The members of Boston's ECE workforce are 'non-traditional students' as they embark upon post-secondary education.

Understanding who the members of our workforce are will enable us to design supports that are better aligned to their strengths and needs, and will ultimately facilitate their success.

Funding for this project was provided by the Boston Community Partnerships for Children.

Acknowledgments: The Boston EQUIP Advisory — Margaret Angell, Boston Public Schools; Doug Baird, Associated Early Care and Education; Marty Cowden, consultant; Dean Elson, Jumpstart; Laurie Glassman, Child Care Choices of Boston; Kelly Graceffa, Child Care Choices of Boston; Latifah Hasan, Dimock Community Health Center; Barbara Jacobs, ABCD Head Start; Charlotte Kahn, The Boston Foundation; John Kelly, East Boston Social Centers; John Lippitt, MA Dept. of Public Health; Mav Pardee, Child Care Capital Investment Fund; Jason Sachs, Boston Public Schools, Sharon Scott-Chandler, ABCD; Stan Schwartz, United Way of Massachusetts Bay; Rod Southwick, MA Department of Early Education and Care; Bryan Van Dorpe, South Boston Neighborhood House; Yasmina Vinci, consultant; Pat Xavier, Boston Child Care Alliance; and Erica Argersinger and Kristen Stinchcombe.

About Boston EQUIP: Boston Early Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP) is a project of Associated Early Care & Education. Boston EQUIP was launched in 1994 with a mission *“to collaborate with members of the early education community to systematically evaluate, set goals for, and improve upon the quality of Boston’s early childhood programs.”* Boston EQUIP is a unique effort to bring research methods that meet the highest academic standards to bear on questions and issues that are born of the community. The staff of Boston EQUIP are regularly in the community listening and anticipating opportunities where research and data can be used as a springboard for positive change in the experiences of young children. Members of academia, practice, and philanthropy meet monthly as the Boston EQUIP Advisory Committee to lend their expertise about content, research methodologies, and dissemination of findings. For more information, visit our website at www.bostonequip.org.

*A copy of this and other reports can be found on the web
at
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