More and Varied Professional Development Opportunities

Despite low compensation, many child care providers do stay in the field because they value and enjoy the important work they do. Those providers often have difficulty enhancing their work. The increasing costs of higher education and training opportunities, along with the lack of formal child care professional development opportunities, contribute to the workforce challenge.

The results of the workforce study suggest that providers do want more education and training in early education. In response to the question “If I could change one thing about my job...,” respondents chose professional development opportunities as the second most popular choice after wages/benefits (see Figure 3).

Survey respondents were also asked which professional development opportunities would be most beneficial, and they were able to check as many as they desired. Online courses were chosen as the most popular option, followed by online training options. Figure 4 shows the top six options chosen by providers for future professional development opportunities. Those findings are encouraging, as they show that in general providers do want to continue to improve the quality of care they can provide through professional development opportunities. Several barriers currently exist, however, and early education professionals often struggle to fulfill this desire or the professional development opportunity that addresses the barriers and includes the options selected by survey respondents will be beneficial to providers, families, and children.

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A complete report highlighting all of the survey’s results will be published separately.

The Current Status of Wisconsin’s Child Care Workforce

The survey asked individuals to answer questions on a variety of topics including education and credentials, experience, job satisfaction, compensation, and child enrollment. A total of 1,425 surveys were completed and analyzed, for an overall response rate of 20%. Center directors had the highest return rate of all three subgroups, with 610 of 2,475 surveys received by family child care providers, 560 of 2,475 were completed, for a response rate of 22%. A total of 958 center employees received surveys and 935 were completed, for a response rate of 97%. When determining a return rate, the sample represents the entire population, the margins of error—calculated at a 95% confidence interval—are as

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Tight that experience should be a contributing factor. I mean, how long, you know, 30 years, but this has been going on for 35 years, and in this field, experience matters over a piece of paper.

Education of Wisconsin’s Workforce Base

Multiple research studies have demonstrated the importance of early education for children’s long-term success in school and in life. A quality early education is one of the most important aspects of a high-quality program to ensure healthy social and emotional development, as well as preparation for future academic success. For example, the National Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project found that children who participate in high-quality early education programs are more likely to succeed in school and are less likely to drop out of school later in life.

Center directors were, on average, the oldest of the three subgroups with 78% over the age of 36. Family child care providers were next with 74%, and 62% of group child care providers were 30-49 years old. The results of the workforce study suggest that Wisconsin’s child care professionals are diverse. There is not necessarily a formal education requirement for a job in the field; however, there is still room to improve.

In general, well-educated teachers are associated with greater cognitive and social gains in children. For example, the National Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project found that children who participate in high-quality early education programs are more likely to succeed in school and are less likely to drop out of school later in life. Education is highly-qualified providers—although immensely beneficial to attract, support, and retain within the child care workforce. Previous studies in Wisconsin and across the nation have found that child care providers leave the field at an alarming rate, often because of the profession’s low pay. The turnover rate for family child care providers in Wisconsin cannot be accurately measured in a single survey; data on survey respondents who were no longer in the workforce was not collected, so these workers would not be accounted for in the study. The turnover rate for family child care providers in Wisconsin is still a long way to go before the child care workforce achieves economic justice.

• These increases don’t match the increase in professional demand (or any other demographic shift). By creating a statewide systematic of all care in the Wisconsin Technical College System, college credit (and partial fulfillment of the requirements for an associate’s degree) could, in some cases, be awarded based on experience learning in a program’s link to quality. The child care field is often associated with low wages and few benefits. Not surprisingly, early care and education has been found to be one of the lowest paying professions in the United States. Because of the low pay, turnover rate is very high. For example, the National Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project found that turnover rate in the child care field in Wisconsin cannot be accurately measured in a single survey; data on survey respondents who were no longer in the workforce was not collected, so these workers would not be accounted for in the study. The turnover rate for family child care providers in Wisconsin is still a long way to go before the child care workforce achieves economic justice.

According to the workforce study, current median wages for family child care providers are $10.75 per hour, which is less than the current federal minimum wage of $10.25 per hour. Wisconsin cannot be accurately measured in a single study, because our survey respondents averaged a high number of years of experience, we acknowledge that our survey may represent many of the most committed and experienced members of the field.
Twitch that experience should be a contributing factor. I may have less years, 30, but have done this for 35 years, and in the field, experience matters over a piece of paper.

Education of Wisconsin’s Workforce Base

Multiple research studies have focused on the quality of early care and education findings that the education of early care professional is one of the most important aspects of a high-quality program. In general, well-educated teachers are associated with greater cognitive and social gains in children, more responsive and active learning environments, and developmentally appropriate outcomes. Wisconsin, these early childhood teachers with two- or four-year degrees in early education after significantly higher quality learning environments for young children, with a strong emphasis on experiential interactions.

According to the results of the workforce study, many Wisconsin providers have already earned either two- or four-year degrees. Not surprisingly, center directors had the highest level of education, followed by center employees, and family child care providers. 47% of center directors, 28% of center employees, and 20% of family child care providers have at least one dependent child at home.
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According to the results of the workforce study, many Wisconsin providers have already earned either a two- or four-year degree. Not surprisingly, center directors had the highest level of education, followed by center employees, familychild care providers, and regional directors. Of the subgroups that were surveyed, Wisconsin providers have a two-year associate’s degree or higher, and 47% of the workforce have obtained an associate’s degree or higher education. Many of these providers have already accumulated 10-20 years of extensive training experience and many hours of credit-based training. Comments from the workforce survey were not as specific as they should be. For example, the statement that “I have experience in teaching.”

Affordability for parents continues to limit efforts to improve compensation despite a program’s link to quality.

Center directors were also asked to indicate what they believed was the common reason for staff to leave the field. Of the 340 survey respondents who indicated that a monetary supplement would entice them to stay in the field, the most common reason was financial issues. Because our survey respondents averaged a high number of years of experience, we acknowledge that our survey may represent many of the most experienced and educated members of the field.

Data from the workforce study shows that wages are not comparable with professionals in public education, even when professional qualifications and job responsibilities are similar. And perhaps most significantly, affordability for parents continues to limit efforts to improve compensation despite a program’s link to quality.

“Is there a very strong field and little compensation. I teach and I could afford the little compensation. I think more than other teachers…”

Low Turnover in the Field: Retention Incentives Help

Previous studies in Wisconsin and across the nation have been found to be one of the lowest paying professions in the United States. Because factors like low compensation, high-quality provider, and education have found that the education of ECE professionals is one of the most important aspects of a high-quality program. In general, well-educated teachers are associated with greater cognitive and social gains in children, more responsive and active learning environments, and developmentally appropriate outcomes. Moreover, those early childhood teachers with two- or four-year degrees in early education after significantly higher quality learning environments for young children, with a strong emphasis on experiences.

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More and Weak Professional Development Options Desired

Despite low compensation, many child care providers do stay in the field because they value and enjoy the important work they do. Those providers often have difficulty accessing career counseling, training, or higher education to enhance their work. The increasing costs of higher education and training opportunities, along with the lack of a formal child care professional development system, contribute to the workforce challenge.

The results of the workforce study suggest that providers do want more education and training in early education. In response to the question “If I could change one thing about my job…” respondents chose professional development opportunities as the second most popular choice after wages/benefits (see Figure 5).

Survey respondents were also asked which professional development opportunities would be most beneficial, and were able to check as many options as they desired. Five low-cost career counseling topics were among the most popular selections, followed by online training options. Figure 4 shows the top six choices for future professional development opportunities. Those findings are encouraging, as they show that in general providers want to continue to improve the quality of care they can provide through professional development opportunities. Several barriers currently exist, however, and early educators and professionals often struggle to fulfill their desire to improve. A professional development system that addresses the barriers and includes the options selected by survey respondents will be beneficial to providers, families, and children.

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Total number of responses (n=1425)

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Survey respondents were also asked which professional development opportunities would be most beneficial, and were able to check as many options as they desired. Free or lower cost training was the most popular selection, followed by online training options. Figure 6 shows the top six options selected by survey respondents will be beneficial to providers, families, and children.

The Current Status of Wisconsin’s Child Care Workforce

Wisconsin’s child care workforce is an essential asset to the state’s economy. The child care workforce provides care for children and families, and is crucial to supporting the growth and development of children. Child care providers are the backbone of the early childhood education system.

The Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) and the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) surveyed child care providers across the state of Wisconsin. Surveys were sent to all regulated child care centers, a random sampling of employees from regulated child care centers, and a random sample of child care providers across the state. Survey recipients were also given the option of completing the survey online. Surveys were sent to all regulated child care centers, a random sampling of employees from regulated child care centers, and a random sample of child care providers. All three data sets were gathered from the Department of Children and Families statewide database, included both for-profit and not-for-profit centers, and were geographically representative of the entire population.

Figure 6: The top six options selected by survey respondents

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