



**Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for
Young Children and Families, a BUILD E-Book**

Build
INITIATIVE
Strong Foundations For
Our Youngest Children

Preface

Race to the Top–Early Learning Challenge (ELC) is the major federal funding initiative seeking to support states in developing high quality early childhood systems, especially targeted to children with high needs. Launched in 2011 as a joint initiative of the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, there have been three rounds of major grants under the ELC, with 20 states now participating and funding that totals just over \$1 billion.

This federal initiative had particular meaning to the BUILD Initiative and its founders, members of the Early Childhood Funders Collaborative. For more than a decade, BUILD has served as a catalyst for change and a national support system for state policy leaders and early childhood systems development. Not only did BUILD’s work help shape the federal initiative, but it was also the fulfillment of the founders’ most fervent hopes—that states could create detailed blueprints for an early childhood system, with budgets to support significant infrastructure development. BUILD staff, consultants, and many colleagues in the field rose to the challenge and provided extensive support to states as they applied for, and now implement, the federal opportunity.

The Early Learning Challenge supports states in their efforts to align, coordinate, and improve the quality of existing early learning and development programs across the multiple funding streams that support children from their birth through age five. Through the ELC, states focus on foundational elements of a state system: creating high quality, accountable early learning programs through Quality Rating and Improvement Systems; supporting improved child development outcomes through health, family engagement and vigorous use of early learning state standards and assessments; strengthening the early childhood workforce; and measuring progress.

Thirty-five states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico applied for the 2011 round of the Early Learning Challenge grants with nine states initially and then five more selected from this pool for funding. Sixteen states plus the District of Columbia responded to a new 2013 third round of grants; six were selected.

Round 1: California, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington

Round 2: Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon, and Wisconsin

Round 3: Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Vermont

Since the launch of the ELC, grantee states have rapidly moved from concept to implementation. Through this E-Book, we share learnings from the initial implementation of the efforts, highlighting experience, trends, and reflections stemming from the significant federal investment in this strategic work. The chapters are authored by experts who have worked in tandem with state leaders to gather information. By documenting the experience of the states, captured through interviews with state leaders, *Rising to the Challenge* provides a source of learning for all fifty states and territories and puts into practice our leadership commitment to continuous learning in the best interests of the children and families to whom we are all dedicated.



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Chapter
4

**Trends and Innovations in Early Childhood
Education Workforce Development**

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Introduction

A growing body of research over the past 30 years demonstrates that the quality of early childhood programs is largely determined by the quality of the providers (e.g., early childhood teachers, program directors, family child care providers, center-based staff, etc.). As such, ensuring adequate preparation, training and support for the early childhood education (ECE) workforce has become a primary focus for policymakers, institutions of higher education and the ECE community itself.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) defines professional development as “initial preparation (pre-service) and learning experiences (in-service) designed to improve the knowledge, skills/ behaviors, and attitudes/values of the early childhood workforce.”¹ With respect to the connection between professional development and optimal child outcomes, NAEYC maintains that to assure the provision of high-quality early childhood programs, it is necessary to have a highly competent workforce and “professional development provides the path to achieving that goal.”²

Recognizing the critical need for professional preparation, workforce development was identified as one of five key areas of reform in the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (ELC). As stated by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services, the overarching goal in this area is supporting a great early childhood education workforce by providing “professional development, career advancement opportunities, differentiated compensation and incentives to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities.”³

This chapter provides a review of workforce development efforts funded through the ELC, based on interviews with leaders from seven states awarded ELC grants. The states included represent various areas of the country, a wide array of demographics and size, and all three ELC funding phases. The following chart depicts the states, the funding specifically allocated to workforce and professional development within each state’s ELC grant, and the percentage of that allocation relative to the total amount awarded to each state.



STATE	Total Challenge Award	Workforce Development Allocation (\$)	Workforce Development Allocation (%)
Colorado	\$44.9 million	\$6.6 million	15%
Illinois	\$52.5 million	\$13.1 million	25%
North Carolina	\$70 million	\$23.2 million	33%
Oregon	\$30.8 million	\$6.9 million	22%
Pennsylvania	\$51.7 million	\$8.7 million	17%
Rhode Island	\$50 million	\$14.6 million	29%
Washington	\$60 million	\$24.5 million	41%

The chapter highlights common trends, replicable models of innovation, and ongoing challenges in workforce development focusing on five key themes that emerged from the work of the states. Integrated and interwoven throughout is an emphasis on addressing disparity (e.g., income, home language, race, culture) as it impacts early learning and development. In part, this is the case because the primary aim of the ELC is to improve the quality of early learning and

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¹ National Association for the Education of Young Children, “What is Professional Development in Early Childhood Education?” Accessed May 6, 2015. <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/What%20is%20Professional%20Development%20in%20Early%20Childhood%20Education.pdf>.

² Id.

³ U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Application for Initial Funding CFDA Number: 84.412.” Accessed May 6, 2015. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/resources-phase-1.html>.



development and to close the achievement gap for children with high needs. But the focus on addressing disparity also reflects the unique nature and composition of the ECE workforce and an understanding of the associated challenges to providing effective professional development. For example, it is widely recognized that the ECE workforce includes large numbers of non-native English speakers, low-wage workers, and individuals pursuing academic and professional pathways through institutions ill-equipped to meet the needs of non-traditional students. It is also understood that the diversity of the ECE workforce is a great strength and that efforts to support that diversity are essential to sustaining a workforce that reflects the diversity of the young children and families being served.

Building the Capacity of Professional Development Systems

In an effort to build capacity, there is a national trend toward fully integrating professional development systems with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). There is a parallel trend toward developing ECE workforce registries. As our intention is to highlight innovative capacity-building efforts, examples of those trends are not included here. Instead, what follows are models from Oregon, Colorado, Washington and Rhode Island that provide an array of approaches to building capacity of

professional development systems using system integration; technology; online coursework and regional institutes; and a state-sponsored training center.

Oregon: Building Capacity through Systems Integration

Increased alignment and integration of systems is a widely utilized approach to building the capacity of professional development systems. To that end, Oregon provides a useful model because of its comprehensiveness. In Oregon, the ECE workforce registry and the child care licensing system are completely integrated into its QRIS. Oregon used ELC funding to incorporate into its QRIS the foundations, components, and standards embedded in its workforce registry, professional development, and licensing systems. The impact of this comprehensive integration has been significant. Rates of participation in the QRIS have sky-rocketed. In the past, Oregon received 200 ECE workforce registry applications in a year. By contrast, it recently received over 650 applications in a single month. The increased interdependence between the QRIS and professional development systems has also fostered greater participation rates in training and professional development because staff has to be at higher steps on the registry in order for its place of employment to qualify at a higher QRIS tier. As well, the comprehensive system integration has yielded an increased demand for professional development focused on professional standards.

Colorado: Building Capacity through Increased Use of Technology

The new, fully integrated Professional Development Information System (PDIS) being launched in Colorado is a promising model of using technology to strengthen the capacity of systems. The \$1.2 million effort represents an all-in-one approach to aligning professional competencies; professional development training and courses; the workforce registry; credentialing; and a computer-based learning management system. The goal is to enroll 15,000 ECE professionals in the new system by December 2016.

The PDIS will align higher education coursework, trainings, and individualized professional development plans with Colorado's research-based Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators. The Competencies provide the link between two-year and four-year higher education programs; ongoing training and coaching; and, Colorado's Early Childhood credential.

Through the PDIS, EC professionals can create online career portfolios that include college transcripts, records of professional development trainings, and employment history. The PDIS also supports online application for and awarding of Colorado's EC credential.

Through the PDIS, individuals can create professional development plans based on a self-assessment of competencies and career goals, take online courses, and receive recommendations of face-to-face learning opportunities related to their goals.

The PDIS will directly link to Colorado Shines, the state's QRIS. ECE sites earn QRIS points for workforce qualifications based on levels of staff credentials and staff completion of the Competencies Self-Assessment and EC Professional Development Plans. Linking the PDIS to the QRIS thus incentivizes professionals to enroll in the workforce registry.

Washington: Building Capacity through Online Coursework and State-Sponsored Institutes

Lack of accessibility can constrain workforce development efforts and aspirations. Washington is focusing on the development of online coursework – and related scholarship programs – as one way to make ECE professional development activities more accessible and affordable. As a result, it has seen greater engagement by groups who might otherwise miss out on such opportunities (e.g., family child care providers, ECE professionals with their own families and family responsibilities, non-traditional students).

One advantage to online courses is that students can immediately apply new learning to their practice. And because the coursework is aligned with QRIS standards, graduates are able to demonstrate practice that reflects the highest levels of QRIS standards and ECE competencies.

Another noteworthy effort to increase accessibility to professional development activities is Washington's Early Achiever Institutes, offered to ECE providers participating in the QRIS. These institutes are designed to provide additional support on the Early Achievers Standards, with sessions ranging from improving instructional support to incorporating developmental screenings. To date, there have been six regional Early Achievers Institutes across the state, engaging over 1500 providers at least once.

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The content of the intensive four-day institute directly links to quality standards. Through the institute, providers can become reliable observers on CLASS, engage in a “deep dive” of Environment Rating Scales, learn about the research base underlying high quality instructional interactions, or focus on practical implementation of evidence-based strategies designed to improve program quality and child and family outcomes.

Given its large Hispanic population, the Early Achiever Institute in Central Washington was conducted entirely in Spanish. The resources developed for the institute – also in Spanish – will be circulated among the Spanish-speaking workforce, including those who did not participate in the institute. The need for an institute conducted in Spanish was even greater than organizers anticipated. Initially conceived to engage 75 participants, actual attendance at the initial institute was 265. Going forward, all Early Achiever Institutes will include sessions in Spanish.

Based on positive evaluations from both participants and presenters, Washington plans to continue offering Early Achiever Institutes and to create a web-based broadcast series called the “Early Achiever Answer Hour,” through which providers will have even wider access to information related to implementing quality standards.

Rhode Island: Building Capacity through a State-Sponsored Training Center

In an effort to shift from an “anything goes” approach to training and professional development to a more career-focused approach, Rhode Island created the Center of Early Learning Professionals. The center receives \$14 million from two ELC funding areas – \$5 million related to program quality improvement and \$9 million related to delivering professional development and technical assistance.





In creating the center, the contracted organization partnered with a local non-profit that had a history of successfully working with Spanish-speaking family child care providers and other “hard to reach” groups in the ECE workforce. In order to make professional development activities widely available, the center operates out of a centrally located building as well as several satellite locations. The intent is for the center to be nimble in responding to professional development needs by quickly developing and offering new training opportunities on identified topics of interest and areas of need.

Toward assuring quality consistency, all training provided by the center is aligned with the Rhode Island workforce competencies for ECE professionals. In addition, the center works closely with the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families such that the center approves any professional development activities that count toward the 20 hours of training required for child care licensing.

Since launching the center in January 2014, over 400 people have participated in center-sponsored professional development activities. As center leaders continue to expand the scope of their offerings, new trainings are developed to address missing topics identified through an assessment conducted using the Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory (e.g., infant toddler specialization, training for administrators).

Overall, the creation of the center has made it possible for Rhode Island to shift from professional development and training that is provided informally and in-house to a more formal, structured, content-driven approach. Online training modules are one example of the new formats

with which they are experimenting to increase access. As the center gains greater understanding of what individual ECE programs currently offer in the name of professional development, the intention is to strengthen, augment and improve those efforts on a statewide basis.

Developing Stronger and More Broadly Defined Career Pathways

The field of early childhood education is striving to increase its level of professionalism and earn the respect and benefits derived by other professionals who work with children and families (e.g., elementary school teachers, social workers). Toward that end, developing means of strengthening the quality and credibility of ECE training activities becomes a critical issue. Examples from North Carolina and Oregon provide replicable models that significantly raise the bar in this area. Likewise, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania are taking creative and significant steps toward expanding the use of competencies to ensure consistent quality and provide position-specific professional development opportunities. Finally, Pennsylvania and Illinois have been expanding the use of credentials as a means of codifying and standardizing job descriptions, qualifications, competencies, roles and responsibilities. Their work is unique in that they are focusing on positions that have heretofore been widely held but rarely credentialed. In so doing, they are broadening the conceptualization of career pathways available to ECE professionals, providing consistency to position descriptions and expectations, and “legitimizing” jobs that have long been part of the spectrum of ECE positions but have lacked formal recognition and definition.

North Carolina: Continuing Education Credits for Professional Development Training

Given the abundant research on the short-lived impact of one-time trainings and short professional development workshops (e.g., one to two hours), North Carolina set a goal of helping ECE providers re-conceptualize quality with respect to professional development activities. Specifically, North Carolina shifted away from awarding “training hours” for engaging in professional development activities in favor of awarding CEUs (continuing education units). It also increased the number of contact hours required for approved trainings, establishing five contact hours (i.e. one-half a CEU) as the minimum requirement. For the sake of comparison, a three-semester unit course meets for 48 contact hours, the equivalent of 4.8 CEUs. Currently, CEUs in North Carolina do not translate into college credits per se.

In order to support the transition from training hours to CEUs, North Carolina is building the capacity of its resource and referral network so that CEU-bearing training can be provided through the network. The content of the CEU-bearing trainings must be evidence-based, research-based and developed by university faculty. While most training is currently delivered in a face-to-face format, plans are underway to begin offering online CEU-bearing training as well.

The new CEU-bearing trainings reflect a shift to more intensive, competency-related content. Previously, training workshops focused on topics such as playground safety, encouraging math or literacy skills, and ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale).

The following are examples of the topics and content covered in the new CEU-bearing trainings:

- Choosing and using appropriate curriculum and formal assessment.
- Providing and utilizing technical assistance.
- Developing cultural competence.
- Developing directors’ leadership and directors’ view of themselves as leaders.

Oregon: College Credit for Prior Learning and Experience

As part of an overall effort to align all professional development learning and training across its system, Oregon has begun bridging community-based training and credit-bearing training. In particular, the state has established a means by which to award college credit for prior learning and experience. The Oregon registry rates professionals along a spectrum of 12 steps. An ECE professional rated at step 7 or above can enroll at any of the 17 Oregon community colleges and receive 9-15 credits for prior learning and experience. Each community college determines the number of credits that will be awarded to step 7 professionals and the subject areas to which those credits will apply. Different colleges may award more or fewer credits within the 9-15 credit range, but the number of credits is predetermined by each college – not evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The credits are applied as electives related to ECE, not as general education electives.



Oregon has established a means by which to award college credit for prior learning and experience.

Rhode Island: Expanding Existing and Creating New Competency Frameworks

Rhode Island used ELC funds to extend its existing competency framework and to create new frameworks. The existing framework has been extended to include early childhood special education teachers and early intervention specialists. New frameworks have been created for family child care providers, professional development providers, administrators and education coordinators. In expanding the competency framework, Rhode Island is building a system that recognizes commonalities among positions but also honors the differences between discrete roles and responsibilities. As the unique needs of each group become clearer and better defined, professional development opportunities specifically designed to meet those needs are being created and offered.

The expanded competency framework has resulted in expanding the pool of those who are qualified to





provide professional development and technical assistance to the ECE workforce, thus assuring a higher and more consistent level of quality and content. As well, by more thoroughly articulating the role-specific professional development needs of various ECE sub-groups, those unique needs can be differentiated from the professional development needs of other groups of professionals who work with children and families (e.g., elementary school teachers, pediatricians).

Pennsylvania: Creating Competencies for Home Visitors

Pennsylvania is currently creating competencies specifically for home visitors. The overarching goal is to create alignment across the home visiting workforce similar to that which already exists for the rest of the ECE workforce. The new competencies will include the necessary knowledge, skills and practices to inform and impact the relationship home visitors have with families, and promote a strength-based approach to continuous quality improvement of practice. Still in development, the plan includes the creation of a self-assessment component for home visitors and identification of the specific professional development needs of home visitors. Full integration of the home visitor competencies into the state's Professional Development Registry is targeted for the end of 2016.

Illinois: Credentials for Family Child Care, Family Specialists, Technical Assistance Providers

Illinois has had credentials for directors, ECE teachers, and infant-toddler specialists for many years. These credentials

have been fully aligned with NAEYC, Head Start and Illinois professional teaching standards, and fully embedded in the Illinois QRIS. While the state recognized the need and was in the process of developing Family Child Care and Family Specialist Credentials, prior to the ELC, there was no funding to pilot and establish new credentials. Although the current effort does not require a large investment of ELC dollars, the impact has been significant and the state can finally respond to long-standing requests from those in the field.

- **Family Child Care Credential:** Illinois has nearly 10,000 licensed family child care (FCC) providers and over 50,000 unlicensed family care providers. Since 2006, the state has received requests for a credential that meets the unique needs of these groups and incorporates educational components relevant to operating a family child care setting. Given the enormous demand for an FCC credential, it is not surprising that the response has been equally enormous. Typically, Illinois seeks 100-150 participants to appropriately “test” a new credential. But within just a few weeks of the launch, the credentialing agency received nearly 200 inquiries from FCC providers interested in participating. As such, there was no need to initiate a statewide marketing plan to recruit participants because the state had already exceeded the number needed. The credential is currently being piloted and will roll out statewide in 2016.
- **Family Specialist Credential:** The Family Specialist Credential is also currently being piloted and will roll out statewide in 2016. This credential is specifically geared to those who work in family engagement, interact closely with families, and provide family support services. Grassroots advocates for such a credential have been active since the early 2000s, but efforts were uncoordinated and unfunded until 2011. Given the small amount of state support, progress was slow until ELC funding enabled the full development and piloting of the credential. While it is not possible to anticipate the number of people who will apply for the Family Specialist Credential, responses to a state survey among 105 employers of the “family support workforce” strongly reinforce the need for such a credential, in part reflecting that family engagement is a critical aspect of the quality infrastructure in Illinois.

- **Technical Assistance Credential:** The Technical Assistance Credential is currently in the preliminary stage of pilot preparation and the credential components and framework are being finalized. It will be piloted in early 2015 and rolled out statewide by the end of 2016. This credential is for professionals who work with teachers and/or administrators, provide mentoring and/or coaching, and contribute to quality enhancement efforts. At present, there is no data to determine exactly how many people might qualify or apply for this credential. But it is clear that the technical assistance workforce is growing.

” Coaching is becoming an increasingly popular and promising strategy for providing individualized technical assistance, mentoring, and observation that can lead to improved practice and better child outcomes in ECE settings.

- **Consultation Master Credential:** This certification and credential is being developed to support providers specifically serving populations with high needs. The process began in 2014 with an effort to align competencies across five knowledge mediator roles: relationship-based career advisor, instructor, regional QRIS Keystone STARS management, regional program quality assessors, and technical assistance consultants. The comprehensive alignment includes common, shared competencies as well as unique competencies for each role. The final alignment document will serve as a guide to the development of the Consultation Master Credential.

Pennsylvania: Credentials for “Knowledge Mediators”

Continuous quality improvement for individuals, classrooms, facilities, programs and systems is a guiding theme in Pennsylvania’s QRIS and its professional development system framework. As the QRIS system continues to mature and meet the goal of increasing the number of high-quality programs serving Pennsylvania’s children, including those with high needs, it became evident that knowledge mediators (e.g., master consultants, technical assistance providers, peer mentors) must keep pace and continue to “dig deeper.” To that end, Pennsylvania began developing new credentials for knowledge mediators. Coursework to support both the Peer Mentor and the Consultation Master Credential will be in place by the end of 2017.

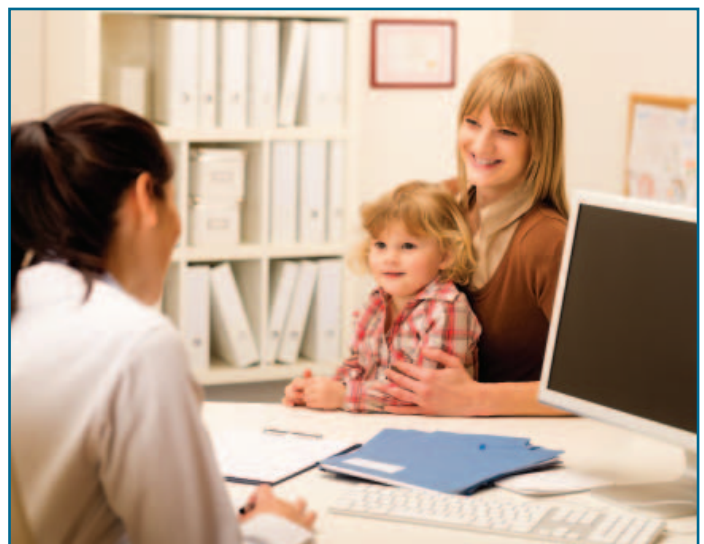
- **Peer Mentor Credential:** The Rising STARS Peer Mentoring program was established in 2013-14 to strengthen the QRIS and its embrace of providers early in quality improvement. This Rising STARS mentoring targets STAR 1 providers who are moving into the system and supports their movement to STAR 2. Peer mentors complete specialized training and participate in 1:1 pairings or as co-facilitators in cohort groups. In order to assure consistent quality, a Peer Mentor Certificate is being developed that will be recognized on the Career Lattice. Requirements for the credential will be defined in 2015.

Using Coaching to Support Improved Practice and Efficacy

Coaching is becoming an increasingly popular and promising strategy for providing individualized technical assistance, mentoring, and observation that can lead to improved practice and better child outcomes in ECE settings. The coaching efforts in Colorado and Washington serve as useful, replicable models.

Colorado: Launching a Statewide System of Coaching and Technical Assistance

As part of its workforce development investment, Colorado allocated \$875,000 from the ELC to launch a statewide system of coaching and technical assistance. Since coaching competencies and credentials were already being developed,



the focus of the new effort was to build out the system in order to ensure consistent access and equity to coaching services across the state.

To inform the effort, a statewide survey was conducted among 171 coaches. Reflecting the needs identified in the survey, plans are underway to provide a two-day training and follow-up webinars for 47 coaches on a standardized, practice-based coaching model that includes a focus on reflective supervision and meets the requirements of Colorado's Coaching Credential. Additional training on the Colorado Shines QRIS Coaching Framework is planned for early 2015. Four regional coaching consultants have been hired to provide ongoing support, supervision and regionally-based training to local coaches as they endeavor to obtain their Coaching Credential.

Washington: Integrating a Coaching Framework into the QRIS

Coaching is an integral part of ECE workforce development efforts in Washington. An evidence-based coaching and technical assistance framework has been developed that is aligned with and integrated into the Washington QRIS, representing a \$17.5 million ELC investment. Washington's early learning leaders also have built a statewide infrastructure and engaged multiple ECE sectors in a reflective feedback process on implementation of the coaching framework (e.g., Head Start, center-based programs, Family Child Care, state-funded pre-k teachers). This inclusive approach has helped to break down silos and foster a shared language and common understanding with respect to coaching and technical assistance.

Currently, coaches participate in intensive training and are required to become reliable observers in CLASS PreK and Toddler CLASS and have extensive knowledge of the Environment Rating Scales. Additionally, coaches are trained in practice-based coaching and adult resiliency and wellness. Because coaches engage in extensive professional development on advanced material, the development of a college credit-bearing coaching certificate is underway. Once implemented, coaches will receive college credit as they earn the new evidence-based coaching credential. As part of the certificate program, coaches complete an internship and demonstrate an ability to improve program quality. Having identified specific and widespread areas of training needs (e.g., developing cultural competency, working with children with special needs), Washington is



developing the resources to address those needs and plans to deploy related professional development resources through its coaching network.

The data collected on the impact and implementation of coaching has led to significant changes to the model. In particular, Washington realized that coaching needs to be available to those at lower tiers of the QRIS than originally anticipated. This insight necessitated a realignment of the allocation of coaching dollars. In addition, to ensure that coaching is available to more providers at more QRIS levels, coaches are now trained in those areas of technical assistance needed by providers at lower QRIS tiers.

Coaches in Washington use technology to bolster and expand what they can provide:

- The coaching cycle starts with an action plan, moves to focused observation, and then to feedback. Because some coaches cover large geographical areas, some coaching is provided virtually (i.e., using online methods). A virtual coaching platform is being planned which also will allow feedback to be provided through a web-based program.
- Through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Washington integrated the Coaching Companion into its model, a web-based annotated video tool that allows providers to video themselves and share the video with others. Using the Coaching Companion, coaches can view providers "in action" as they try out new skills or interactions and they can provide feedback in a timely manner. The Coaching Companion also allows providers to connect with each

other and develop communities of practice. Coaches can connect providers with similar interests or issues so that they can see each other's practice and provide feedback, engage in discussions of mutual concern, and offer peer support.

- Coaches post online information and resources broadly requested by providers, and individual providers can download the information at their convenience. As it develops its open source system for sharing information between coaches and providers, Washington hopes eventually to share the system with other states.

Offering Incentives to Make Professional Development Affordable and Accessible

It has long been recognized that providing financial incentives can be an effective means of encouraging engagement in professional development and making professional development opportunities more accessible to more participants. The examples that follow from Washington, Colorado, and North Carolina demonstrate a variety of effective approaches to using incentives.

Washington: Providing Scholarships for College Education and Engagement in Professional Development Systems

Washington allocated \$12 million from its federal Child Care and Development Block Grant for scholarships to QRIS participants who were continuing their college education. The scholarship program has resulted in more individuals choosing to participate in the QRIS from an earlier point in their careers, more ECE workforce members attending institutions of higher education than ever before, and new faculty being hired to meet the demand created by increased enrollment.

Washington allocated another \$6 million to professional development incentives for individuals. These incentives are available to all early learning professionals, including those employed at facilities participating in the QRIS. Funding is used to encourage participants to join the ECE registry, reward participants who move up to higher levels on the registry, and support individuals to continue along their educational pathway. The investment has yielded a better understanding of the composition and needs of the ECE workforce and a better understanding of the educational pathways that members of the workforce pursue.

Colorado: Funding Three Separate Scholarship/Incentive Programs

Colorado allocated \$2 million for incentives and scholarships, making this the largest funding focus among its various workforce development investments. By funding three separate incentive/scholarship programs, Colorado is simultaneously supporting individual ECE workforce members, collaborating with community colleges, and helping to encourage workforce development in high need areas of specialization. Colorado's Early Childhood Professional Development Advisory, seated by the state's early learning council (the Early Childhood Leadership Commission), will review results from these initial investments and determine final investment through 2016.

Through T.E.A.C.H., the first of the incentive/scholarship programs, Colorado awarded an additional \$345,000 in scholarships to support individuals pursuing advanced education and professional training. This funding amount increases the state investment in T.E.A.C.H. by almost three-hundred percent. Colorado will identify how features of the Professional Development Information System (PDIS) can be utilized to support the T.E.A.C.H.

The second incentive/scholarship program provides dollar-to-dollar matched funding through the Colorado Community College Foundation to individual community college foundations for scholarships to students preparing for careers in ECE. All 16 of Colorado's community college early childhood programs are participating in this effort. According to the most recent report, nearly 75% of the community college foundations have successfully raised matching funds and have begun awarding scholarships. As a result of the program the profile of funding ECE scholarships has been raised significantly among local foundations.

Finally, the special education program (SPED) in Colorado provides financial supports to professionals specifically interested in early intervention and early childhood special education. Funds are used for scholarships, recruitment, retention, and loan forgiveness, with an overall goal of attracting and retaining people to work in positions that have traditionally been difficult to sustain. A total of \$160,000 was awarded in two rounds of funding in 2014. Half of the awards were for scholarships, 25% were for loan forgiveness, and 25% were for recruitment and retention efforts. Evaluation results will inform decisions about ongoing funding of targeted programs to support preschool special education and early intervention professionals.

North Carolina: Linking QRIS Participation with Incentives for Centers

Separate from incentives directly awarded to individuals, North Carolina offers professional development bonuses to centers rated at 4 and 5 stars on their QRIS. Since 85% of centers across the state are rated at 3 stars or above, the professional development bonus is meant to encourage an even higher level of quality. The one-time award ranges from \$500-3,000, depending upon the size of the center. The bonuses are intended to underscore the importance of professional development while remaining flexible in accommodating individual program differences. To that end, the incentive program includes both required elements and optional elements from which applicants can choose.

To qualify for a professional development bonus, programs must meet the following required elements:

- Each staff member must have an annual, written, individual professional development plan.
- At least one staff member must complete training on the new NC Early Learning and Development Standards.
- The site administrator must complete the course in Choosing and Using Appropriate Curriculum and Formative Assessment (one-half a CEU).

In addition, programs choose two of the following optional elements:

- Staff participation in a cultural competence training or coaching event.
- Program provision of paid time off for teachers who participate in professional development activities.
- All teaching and administrative staff is certified through NC's Early Educator Certification program.
- Program provision of a salary schedule that rewards formal education and longevity.

It took North Carolina over two years to develop the required and optional elements of the program and begin awarding bonuses. Initially, \$750,000 was allocated. How much money actually will be spent depends on how quickly centers can qualify. Although more centers have expressed interest than originally anticipated, it is taking considerable time for them to meet the required criteria. In particular, developing individual professional development plans for each staff member has been challenging both because centers are not used to considering the individual

professional development needs of staff members and because it takes time to become accustomed to the newly developed professional development planning tool.

The hope and assumption is that the time spent by centers in meeting the criteria will be a worthy investment. Aside from the intrinsic value of ensuring outstanding professional development opportunities for staff, centers receiving the professional development bonuses will be at an advantage if and when North Carolina implements its new QRIS currently under discussion. Since individualized professional development plans will likely be required in the new QRIS, centers familiar with the planning tool and already in compliance will be able to more quickly adapt to the new standards.

Creating Cross-Sector Collaborations to Support Innovative Professional Development Efforts

Many of the states interviewed are launching impressive collaborations as part of their workforce development efforts. Through these collaborations, they are bringing together sectors within the ECE community (e.g., center-based teachers, home visitors, FCC directors), other child-serving systems (e.g., child welfare, K-12), and/or institutions of higher education. These collaborations are significant to the extent that they contribute to breaking down barriers between sectors, building industry-wide communication and partnerships, and moving the field in a coordinated way toward greater professionalism and recognition by an ever-expanding audience.

Pennsylvania: Fostering Collaboration and Communication between ECE and K-12

During the summer of 2014, Pennsylvania received funding through the National Governors Association to pilot a small "Governor's Institute" with an over-arching goal of fostering collaboration and communication between ECE and the K-12 system. The institute brought together 11 teams of up to eight participants. Some categories of participants were *required*—school district administrator, K-3 teacher, ECE program



administrator, and an ECE teacher. Other participants, such as representatives from community organizations and curriculum coordinators, were considered *optional*. Some of the teams represented long-standing collaborations and partnerships; others were comprised of participants who barely knew each other at the start.

The content of the five-day Governor's Institute was built around Kauerz and Coffman's *Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches*.⁴ Time was also allotted for focusing on capacity building and long-term planning. Teams worked to set goals and evaluate progress in terms of the framework and to create action plans for future collaborative efforts. State staff provided follow-up to identify specific teams' needs with respect to carrying out their action plans and making necessary state resources available.

The pilot institute was considered successful in meeting the over-arching goal of fostering collaboration and communication between ECE and the K-12 system. Teams exchanged information, developed relationships, and became more aware of each other's systems and the resources available within each system. The biggest challenge was getting ECE and K-12 administrators to understand the importance of cross-system collaboration, recognize the associated benefits and commonalities, and prioritize building programs based on a comprehensive definition of *early childhood* as extending from birth through grade 3.

Based on the success of the pilot, Pennsylvania is planning annual Governor's Institutes over the next three summers. Funding will come from the ELC and the size of the institutes will be increased to accommodate 24 teams of eight participants each.

North Carolina: Encouraging Community Colleges to Attain NAEYC Accreditation

North Carolina has launched an innovative grant program aimed at providing training and technical assistance for community colleges to apply for NAEYC accreditation

⁴ Kristie Kauerz and Julia Coffman, *Framework for Planning, Implementing and Evaluating PreK-3rd Grade Approaches* (Seattle, WA: College of Education, University of Washington, 2013), accessed May 5, 2015, http://depts.washington.edu/pthru3/PreK-3rd_Framework_Legal%20paper.pdf.



“ North Carolina has launched an innovative grant program aimed at providing training and technical assistance for community colleges to apply for NAEYC accreditation of their ECE programs.”

of their ECE programs. The initial goal was to engage 20 colleges but the response was so positive that the state increased that goal to 24 colleges. Given that 24 community colleges already had accreditation,

by the end of the grant period 48 of the 58 community colleges across North Carolina will have applied for NAEYC accreditation. Ultimately, the goal is for all community colleges to attain accreditation.

The grant program includes funding the cost of the initial accreditation and site visit. Beyond that, individual community colleges are responsible for absorbing ongoing costs. Leadership at each community college has signed an agreement to maintain accreditation and absorb related costs for at least the initial accreditation period of seven years. It is hoped that each college will voluntarily elect to pursue re-accreditation after that point.

Rhode Island: Providing Professional Development for the Incumbent ECE Workforce

The collaborative effort represented by the Institute for Early Childhood Teaching and Learning at Rhode Island College is unique in that it particularly targets the incumbent ECE workforce. As is typical in many states, the incumbent ECE workforce in Rhode Island includes many non-traditional students with unusual and specific needs. The \$2 million institute addresses those needs by providing

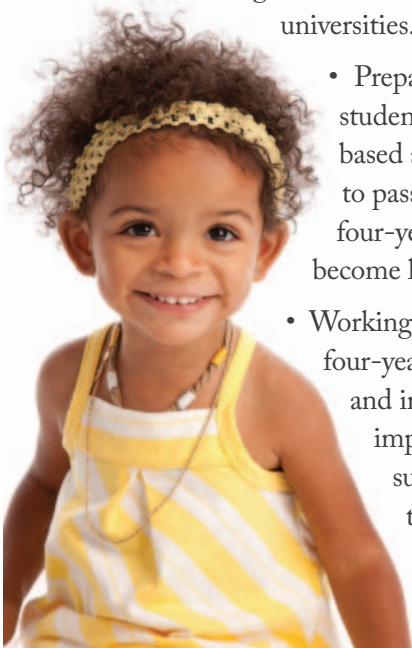
BA-level courses through a hybrid approach. Courses are offered on-line as well as in person, during evening hours and on weekends. Additional academic supports are provided, including targeted advisement and remedial reading, writing, and math support to ensure that participants have the necessary college-level skills to succeed.

Illinois: Encouraging Partnerships among Institutions of Higher Education

The collaborative work being funded in Illinois is innovative in that it encourages partnerships between two-year and four-year institutions of higher education. Two rounds of competitive grant funding have aimed at encouraging innovative partnerships that recognize and build upon the important but distinct contributions made by community colleges and four-year universities with respect to ECE workforce development.

Some examples of the kinds of projects that have been funded include:

- Aligning teacher preparation at two-year and four-year institutions with Illinois teacher standards.
- Creating seamless pathways between two-year and four-year institutions and providing the necessary advisement to ensure seamless transfer for students.
- Creating flexible pathways for degree attainment that allow students to take some coursework at community colleges and other coursework at four-year universities.
- Preparing community college students for the new performance-based assessment they will need to pass during student teaching at four-year universities in order to become licensed.
- Working across two-year and four-year institutions to develop and implement curriculum improvements in critical areas such as early math, infant-toddler development, and cultural and linguistic competency.



“...the definition of quality is being extended to wider segments of the ECE workforce through the implementation of coaching models, the creation of new categories of professional credentials, and the articulation of competencies for specific roles.”

Conclusion: Trends, Implications and Ongoing Challenges

The data collected from the seven states that contributed to this chapter clearly demonstrate that ECE workforce and professional development systems are being successfully built, strengthened and expanded. Within these systems, the definition of quality is being clarified, formalized and extended to wider segments of the ECE workforce through the implementation of coaching models, the creation of new categories of professional credentials, and the articulation of competencies for an increasing number of specific roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Institutions of higher education are being engaged in a variety of ways. Reflecting increasing expectations with respect to the skills, competencies and preparation of the workforce, institutions of higher education are coming to be seen as essential partners in ECE workforce development. They are increasingly collaborating with the ECE community in contributing to the design of professional development and career pathways that respond to the unique needs and strengths of the ECE field and its workforce. In particular, they are endeavoring to address the needs of non-traditional students, including language needs and academic supports, and efforts are guided by a common goal of valuing and retaining the diversity of the ECE workforce while simultaneously increasing levels of professionalism. Important efforts are also underway to engage and partner with the K-12 system in order to build a more comprehensive approach to early education and preparation of the early education workforce.

Despite the impressive array of initiatives being undertaken, there are common challenges shared by the states. Endeavoring to build statewide and comprehensive systems, one challenge is effectively engaging *all* segments of the ECE community (e.g., center-based programs, family child care homes, resource and referral networks, Head Start, infant and toddler centers) so that the entire workforce is strengthened and *all* children benefit, no matter their age, socioeconomic status, location, or the ECE context in which they are served. Many states are also grappling with identifying and addressing the unique needs of each sector while simultaneously addressing the more universal needs of the workforce. Similarly, as progress is made toward full

implementation and integration of QRIS, many states are finding it challenging to construct universal definitions of quality given the differences that exist among the participating sectors.

Another common challenge derives from the substantial language needs of the workforce and the young children being served. Although providing necessary supports and incentives to sustain the diversity of the ECE workforce is a priority across the board, many states have found it difficult to attract and retain teachers with the requisite skills and understanding to support young dual language learners. And separate from the challenge of addressing the language needs of the children, some states have been challenged to recruit enough instructors with ample content expertise and Spanish language fluency to meet the language needs of the workforce itself.

Ensuring equal access to technology and technologically-based tools and supports has been another common challenge. Part of the task is providing sufficient training to ensure the entire workforce is computer literate, both as consumers (e.g., accessing online coursework) and as ECE professionals (e.g., communicating with families via email). Another aspect of the challenge is being able to provide universal access to opportunities such as online coursework, online coaching supports, and online data collection systems.

Unfortunately, what is clear is that inadequate compensation and lack of workplace supports persist as the greatest challenge and the “elephant in the room” that is not being directly addressed. Although financial incentives and scholarships are being provided to encourage professional development, such efforts fall short of addressing the financial inequities that continue to characterize and plague the field. Likewise, there is little recognition of the workplace supports necessary to guarantee the greatest return on professional development investments. “Just as children’s environments can support or impede their learning, work environments promote or hinder teachers’ practice and ongoing skill development.”⁵ Accordingly, more attention needs to be paid to staffing patterns, creating

professional learning communities, providing preparation time, paid sick time and vacation, and developing program leadership that encourages and supports professional development and subsequent implementation of new learning and new skills.

With respect to compensation, although solutions have not been put forth, there is widespread awareness and recognition of the need to increase compensation commensurate with the increased expectations related to quality standards and professional development. If the issue of adequate, comparable compensation is not addressed, ECE professionals with training and preparation equal to K-12 teachers will continue to migrate to the K-12 system. As a result, the field of early education stands to lose the most qualified, best prepared members of its workforce. Similarly, until early care and

education reflects and expects an appropriately high level of professionalism, the field runs the risk of losing capable, creative people who elect instead to enter areas that proffer better pay, better benefits, and greater respect.

Workforce and professional development within ECE continues to be a crucial area with enormous implications that go beyond the workforce itself. According to the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment,

“...one challenge is effectively engaging all segments of the ECE community so that the entire workforce is strengthened and all children benefit, no matter their age, socioeconomic status, location, or ECE context in which they are served.”

“Serious debate at the federal level, echoed in virtually every state, is underway about the vital importance of improving the quality of early education and the most productive strategies for ensuring that young children’s critical early experiences will promote, not undermine, their lifelong learning and healthy development. This confluence of trends carries vast implications for what we expect of those teaching young children. It creates a crucial moment for re-examining the status of the early childhood teaching workforce, and rethinking how our nation is preparing, supporting, and rewarding these teachers.”⁶

Federal initiatives such as the Early Learning Challenge are, at least in part, a way to test the capacity of a field or a group of leaders to initiate reform and explore innovative approaches that can meaningfully address problems

⁵ Center for the Study of Child Care Employment. “Assessing What Teachers Need to Help Children Succeed.” Accessed May 5, 2015. <http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/csce/?s=equal>.

⁶ Marcy Whitebook, Deborah Phillips and Carolee Howes, *Worthy Work, STILL Unlivable Wages: The Early Childhood Workforce 25 Years After the National Child Care Staffing Study, Executive Summary*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley, 2014.

holding back the nation. In order to realize the aims of the Early Learning Challenge, with its focus on the youngest members of our country and those with the highest needs, it is necessary to simultaneously focus on the adults who provide their early care and education. Research for this chapter indicates that state leaders have the ideas, commitment and strategies to build, strengthen and expand effective statewide systems of workforce and professional development. Two essential questions to be addressed going forward are whether the progress being made can be sustained and systematized, and whether the

“...inadequate compensation and lack of workplace supports persist as the greatest challenge and the “elephant in the room” that is not being directly addressed.

field can rise to the requisite level of professionalism and preparation necessary to ensure that ECE experiences consistently produce optimal outcomes for young children. And perhaps of greatest consequence is the question of whether we as a nation will remove the barriers to developing and sustaining the needed workforce by investing not just in professional development, but in the compensation that will make it possible to retain those with the commitment, training and talent to assure that young children derive the greatest benefit from their early learning experiences.

Appendix: Notes on Terminology

Within early childhood, there are multiple terms used to describe early learning settings and experiences (e.g., child care, early care and education, preschool, early childhood education, early learning, center-based, family child care). Because definitions of these terms vary, this paper uses the terms used by each state, providing clarifying information as needed to help the reader understand the scope and context of a particular strategy. Widely used terms and concepts referred to in this paper are noted and defined below:

CEU: A CEU (continuing education unit) is a measure used in continuing education programs for professionals to maintain licenses. Generally, a CEU is defined as ten hours of participation in a recognized continuing education program, with qualified instruction and sponsorship.

CLASS: CLASS is an observational instrument to assess teacher-student interactions in pre-K-12 classrooms and in settings serving infants and toddlers. It describes multiple dimensions of interaction that are linked to student achievement and development. CLASS can be used to assess classroom quality for research and program evaluation and also provides a tool to help new and experienced teachers become more effective.

Coaching: Coaching is a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the coaching recipient. Coaching is designed to build capacity for professional dispositions, skills and behaviors, and focuses on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group.

Competencies: ECE competencies refer to the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to provide high quality care and education to young children and families. Many states have articulated specific competency areas for ECE professionals working with particular populations (e.g., infants, toddlers) and/or at particular levels of responsibility (e.g., center director, master teacher). Some examples of common competency areas are child development and learning, culture and diversity, family and community engagement, dual-language development, observation and assessment, special needs and inclusion, leadership and professionalism.

Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory: The Inventory, administered by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, describes the landscape of a state’s early childhood degree program offerings and captures variations in program goals, content, child age-group focus, student field-based learning, and faculty characteristics and professional development needs. This information allows policy makers, institutions of higher education and other stakeholders to identify gaps and opportunities in the available offerings, make informed policy decisions, and assess the capacity of the higher education system over time.

Environment Rating Scales: Environment rating scales are used to evaluate the quality of child care programs. Such rating scales use observations, rather than structural indicators such as staff-to-child ratio, group size or cost of care, to predict the outcome of child care programs. The scales help programs conduct a research-based evaluation

of their child care setting with suggestions to enhance the quality of their program in the future.

Professional Development: ECE professional development is a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. Such opportunities encompass education, training and technical assistance, and lead to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices and dispositions of ECE professionals.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS): QRIS help to benchmark quality for consumers and broaden awareness of the components of quality, provide additional incentives and resources to programs, and create a stronger infrastructure to support and sustain the quality of programs regardless of setting. QRIS are used to evaluate and observe, recognize and reward, and support and communicate the level of quality in early childhood programs. States participating in the Early Learning Challenge were required to have a QRIS.

Resource and Referral Network: Resource and referral networks are local and statewide organizations that help parents by providing referrals to local child care providers, information on state licensing requirements, availability of child care subsidies, etc. Resource and referral agencies may also collect information about the local supply of child care, offer training and support to ECE providers, and administer child care subsidies.



T.E.A.C.H.: T.E.A.C.H. scholarships provide access to education so that participants can take coursework leading to Associate and Bachelor's degrees, credentials and licensure in early childhood education or child development. States develop scholarship models to address the specific needs of their workforce.

Workforce Registry: A registry is an information system for the ECE workforce that promotes professional growth and development, captures data about ECE practitioners in a variety of roles, is based on state career level systems that provide a framework for professional development, places individuals on a career level based upon verified educational information, recognizes and honors professional achievements of the ECE workforce, and informs policy makers and partners.

About the Author



Randi B. Wolfe, Ph.D., has worked in ECE for more than 35 years. She has taught preschool, directed a child care center, and developed a family support center. She was a professor of Early Childhood Education at Northern Illinois University for 10 years. Since moving to Los Angeles in 2007, Randi has focused on ECE workforce development and policy. She created an Early Care and Education Workforce Initiative that awarded grants to collaborations of community colleges, universities and feeder high schools aimed at removing barriers and creating pathways to ECE careers. She instituted an incentive program to provide stipends to ECE teachers completing college coursework and pursuing degrees. And she built the LA County ECE Workforce Consortium and secured \$37 million in funding.

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