



GETTING READY **for** QUALITY

The Critical Importance
of Developing and
Supporting a Skilled,
Ethnically and
Linguistically Diverse
Early Childhood
Workforce



Published by California Tomorrow



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Preface

In the summer of 2004, a small group of child development and early education specialists came together as a working group to identify and discuss issues related to the culturally and linguistically appropriate early care and education of the children of immigrant families. Our discussions were filled with great concerns about the prospect of poor developmental and educational outcomes for not only immigrant children, but for all children, especially low-income children, from non-mainstream ethnic, cultural and language diverse backgrounds.

As we identified and discuss the myriad interconnected issues, one of the most critical themes to emerge involved the need to build a high quality workforce with the skills, abilities and predispositions necessary to meet the needs of this population of children and families. All members of our group were in agreement that a high quality early care and education workforce could not be defined narrowly by traditional early education competencies, but must include cultural and linguistic diversity and skills, and the ability to offer culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

Based upon the group's knowledge of the research on the role of a child's culture and home language in positive development and learning outcomes, our own experiences as members of immigrant, cultural and language diverse communities, and our professional knowledge and experience in early childhood education, we believe that it is critical that issues of culture and language be central to discussions about a high quality workforce in early education.

We were concerned that local, state and federal policy decisions about teacher qualifications for early childhood programs are being made without adequate input from diverse communities about the characteristics of a "highly qualified" workforce. This policy paper was developed because of our deep conviction that maintaining and increasing the diversity of the early care and education workforce is critically important to attaining successful developmental and learning outcomes for America's increasingly diverse communities.

In preparation for this publication, our working group conducted initial research, developed an outline and drafted sections for a document examining issues related to achieving quality through the development of a high quality, culturally and linguistically responsive workforce. We are deeply indebted to Hedy Chang who took our work and shaped it into this policy report. She added her own depth of understanding of the issues, drew upon additional research in the field, and maintained respect and responsiveness to our voices while deftly adding her own wisdom and perspective.

Thanks to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (and especially Lisa Kane and Ruth Mayden) for bringing us together as grantees of the foundation, and supporting our meetings and conversations as a learning community over two years.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Helping children to enter schools “ready to learn” is a prominent focus of national, state, and local initiatives and policies throughout the United States. Policymakers as well as the general public have begun to heed the research-based evidence that positive early learning experiences can help children do well in school and become productive, contributing members of our society. Most school readiness efforts share an explicit commitment to reducing the disproportionately poor educational outcomes experienced by low-income and cultural and linguistic minority children and families.

Research shows that offering high quality early childhood and school readiness programs can improve educational outcomes for low-income and cultural and linguistic minority children. Half of the educational achievement gaps between poor and non-poor children already are found when children enter kindergarten,¹ and high quality early childhood and school readiness programs can improve educational outcomes for low-income and minority children.² Quality matters most for children at risk of not doing well.³

Given the current demographics of the United States, a key component of quality programming is a culturally competent, ethnically and linguistically diverse workforce well-prepared to foster the healthy development of an increasingly diverse population of young children and families. While the United States has always been a diverse society, recent waves of immigration, especially from Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, the Caribbean and Africa have made it even more so. Nearly 41% of the entire child population in the United States is of Latino, Asian or African American/African descent. By 2020, the percent of ethnic, cultural, and language minority children is projected grow to 47%.⁴ Nationwide, one out of five school-aged children now lives in an immigrant family. In California and some large metropolitan areas, this figure is closer to one out of every two children. The largest recent gains in immigration regionally have been in the South and the Midwest.⁵

Over the past two decades, the percentage of school-aged children speaking languages other than English at home has nearly doubled. One child in ten is now an English Language Learner,⁶ although in some areas of the country, the percentage is much higher. For example, in California, 25% of all students between kindergarten and 12th grade are English language learners.⁷

In order to promote school readiness and the well-being of children, early childhood educators must be able to work effectively in partnership with diverse communities, and respond to and build upon the culture, language, and other valuable assets of families. Outcomes for young children cannot be separated from family origins and circumstances. Family members provide the earliest and closest relationships that children have with adults and they also serve as the primary system for promoting children’s physical,

social, emotional and cognitive development. Strong, stable and predictable early family relationships lay the foundation for children to feel secure and to develop the confidence to start exploring and learning about the world in which they live. Children are better prepared to succeed academically when parents as well as teachers feel competent and confident in using children's everyday experiences and a language rich environment to help them learn and develop. Too often, educators who do not value diverse cultural approaches to childrearing, socializing, and instructing children, undermine this confidence.

Effective early childhood programs use the assets of a child's home, such as the language spoken by family members and common cultural practices, to promote early cognitive and social and emotional development. For children and families from the dominant culture (middle class Anglo/Europeans), most programs already build upon their assets and home practices. For example, staff typically speak English and act in accordance with dominant cultural practices, such as using verbal versus non-verbal cues to give direction and engaging in activities that emphasize individual versus collective action and responsibility. Parental involvement is respected and valued when it occurs in "standard" ways that reflect the Anglo/European dominant cultural worldview.

One of the most important challenges facing the field of early care and education is ensuring that its norms, practices and policies respect and draw upon the languages, cultures and contributions of children and families of other backgrounds. Doing so requires an educated and well-trained workforce that reflects the children and families being served. It is also important for the early care and education workforce to have the knowledge, propensities, and language abilities necessary to form sincere and authentic bonds with children and families from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and immigrant parents who are frequently unfamiliar with the norms of mainstream American society and institutions. Programs, for example, need staff who can interact with children using the cultural orientations and spoken and written languages used in the home. Because young children are in the process of developing cognitive skills that are not language specific, for example learning that a word on paper is a symbol of something that is spoken, it is easier for most children to learn such complex concepts in the language and using clues in their environment that they know best and which can be easily used by parents to reinforce the learning at home. Research shows that if teachers in early childhood settings can communicate with children in their home language, they are more likely to establish close secure relationships with the children in their care.⁸ The presence of close relationships between children and teachers has been shown to be a valid predictor for how well children develop social skills as well as better classroom behavior.⁹

When staff is from the community served and reflect similar backgrounds, they may be better equipped to form meaningful relationships with families and help

parents develop the skills to prepare their children to succeed in school. Often, they possess knowledge about the culture, traditions, and behaviors of the children and families because they were raised in a similar manner. Able to offer families insights gained from their own personal experiences, they can help families learn strategies for negotiating differences between the values and beliefs of their own unique ethnic and cultural communities and those of the mainstream culture. Knowing about these issues by virtue of experience makes a staff person a much more credible and useful source of information about early care and education and parenting.

When cultural differences exist, teachers must be equipped to forge relationships across cultural lines and invite parents to help them understand what type of early care and education parents are seeking and what will truly meet their needs and those of their children. Without this two-way exchange, valuable keys to children’s school success are lost. Immigrant parents are particularly vulnerable to the judgement of “experts” because they need information about how things are done in a foreign land and because their own cultural ways are so often devalued. If not treated respectfully, parents lose a sense of their own power and competence—and school readiness efforts remain unbalanced and one-sided.¹⁰

Urgency of defining what a high quality workforce is for diverse communities

Paying careful attention to how “high quality” in early care and education programs and in the workforce is defined is especially important in the face of opportunities to expand access to preschool education. Expanding access will require the development of many new high quality teachers. Assuming that the United States offered a voluntary universal preschool program serving 95% of all four year olds today, experts estimate this country will need a total of 200,556 teachers and an additional 43,888 preschool teachers by 2020. This figure is more than 8 times the estimated current supply of 27,778 preschool teachers who have college degrees.¹¹ Thousands of additional preschool teachers without college degrees are also currently teaching in preschool classrooms. Many of these teachers have some college credits, years of experience in the classroom, and most have taken hundreds of clock hours of professional development courses. In fact, many state policies require that early educators participate in a specified minimum number of hours of professional development activities every year.

Understanding what constitutes “high quality” for culturally and linguistically diverse communities is particularly important because, in part, of increasing pressure to raise preschool teacher qualifications. A movement toward requiring all lead preschool teachers to hold or obtain Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees in early childhood education will, without careful policy attention to prevent it, result in decreasing the diversity, and therefore the quality of the preschool teaching workforce. Decreased diversity is likely to impede school readiness efforts in culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In addition, anec-

dotal evidence indicates that once teachers obtain their degrees, many plan to seek employment in public school districts where salaries, benefits and working conditions are generally higher. This can create a revolving door of teachers in community-based preschool programs, increasing teacher turnover which further reduces quality.¹²

While there is universal agreement that teachers should be well-educated and -trained, not everyone agrees that a Bachelor degree requirement is the only option or that a Bachelor's degree should be used as the primary indicator of teacher quality. For example, coursework required under current four-year Bachelor degree programs typically does not require students to acquire sufficient attitudes, skills, and knowledge for working effectively with children from immigrant families and other marginalized cultural and linguistic communities. Nor does the higher education workforce currently have the capacity to offer such coursework or support students in their efforts to acquire these necessary teacher assets. A requirement to acquire understanding and skills to support bilingual language development and second language acquisition is commonly missing from degree programs. The poor educational outcomes for ethnic, cultural, and language diverse students in public school K-12 programs, where almost universally teachers have at least a BA degree (and where, as a result, 90% of the current K-12 teacher workforce are White Americans of Anglo/European background) is a clear example of how a Bachelor's degree, in and of itself, does not ensure a quality teaching workforce.

The emphasis on a formal academic degree makes it more difficult for the field to recognize the high quality work of early childhood professionals without degrees. This sector of the workforce is heavily represented by individuals who are cultural and linguistic minorities, who often provide high quality early care and education as a result of years of classroom experience and both formal and informal education and training, sometimes attained in other countries. While the Bachelor's degree requirement may appear to have certain desirable features, current degree-granting programs frequently do not include essential elements that contribute to quality early care and education for all children in today's culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Additionally, only 25-50% of 4-year degree granting institutions offer degrees in early childhood education. As such, 4-year degree granting programs are not available in many communities that offer early care and education programs and services.

Another major concern is that Bachelor degree mandates require the investment of sufficient resources that create access to higher education for non-traditional students and pathways for advancement for teachers already in the field. Without scholarships, reasonable timeframes for completing degree programs, and academic and non-academic supportive services, teachers with high quality potential and who are knowledgeable about the lives, languages, and strengths of immigrant and other marginalized cultural and linguistically diverse communities will be excluded from lead teacher positions in the early care and educa-

tion workforce. Four-year degrees are not easy for working adults to obtain, especially if they are combining school with family and work responsibilities. They are especially difficult to obtain for low-income adults with limited proficiency in English or weak academic skills due to low-quality elementary and secondary education experiences that did not prepare them for college. Additionally, non-traditional students (older, part-time students who work and have families) are poorly served by most 4-year degree granting institutions who do not see this population of students as desirable or cost-effective to serve.¹³

Such exclusionary policies and practices also have an adverse economic impact on low income, cultural and linguistic minority communities. Numerous child care economic impact studies have shown that early care and education is big business, competing with industries such as the insurance and financial services industries for importance in income and job generation. Early care and education jobs provide important sources of employment and income in culturally and linguistically diverse communities that are frequently without other major employers. Jobs in early care and education have long been a major source of stable employment for people living in low-income neighborhoods, especially women, because prior training or credentials have not generally been required to obtain these positions. Although jobs in early care and education typically do not pay well, they currently provide meaningful employment opportunities for those committed to living in and supporting the development and learning of young children in their communities.

A Call to Action: Building the pathways for a high quality, culturally and linguistically diverse workforce

To promote quality early care and education in today's diverse communities, we must clearly invest in policies, programs, practices, and infrastructure that promote three goals:

- redefine what is quality care and education in a culturally and linguistically diverse society
- promote diversity and inclusion of ethnic, cultural, and language diverse educators in the workforce
- and improve the working conditions and professional status for all early childhood educators.

Before degree-based mandates for lead teachers are cemented into place, all educators must have access to a system of workforce development that includes multiple pathways to quality teaching and to qualifying for lead teacher positions. Pathways that include formal 2- or 4-year degree granting programs must include adequate resources to support the participation of low-income non-traditional culturally and linguistically diverse students. Pathways that are built upon high quality informal education and training programs must also prepare teachers to successfully qualify for lead teaching positions.

Demonstrated teacher competencies and the results of culturally and linguistically appropriate assessments of young children's growth, development, and

learning should largely determine whether teachers are providing high quality early care and education, not simply whether they have completed specified academic programs that are not available on an equitable basis to all.

The field of early care and education has an unprecedented and unique opportunity to build a high quality, culturally and linguistically relevant early care and education system that is supported by a high quality teaching workforce. Such an opportunity can exist if policymakers, the general public and the field of early education ensure that efforts to advance preschool initiatives include articulation and funding for alternative educational pathways for under-represented groups along with the resources necessary for current and future early childhood education teachers to pursue and successfully complete such pathways.

II. DEFINING HIGH QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY

In a diverse society, quality early childhood and school readiness programming includes commonly accepted definitions of quality but also goes above and beyond them. This section lists the elements that are widely considered to be critical to a high quality early childhood education program. These elements are accompanied by recommendations that indicate how they should be expanded in order to address the needs of all children, including immigrants and other marginalized ethnic groups living in low-income communities¹⁴ :

- *Skilled and effective teachers* who are sensitive and responsive to children and know how to build upon children's emerging understandings and skills. Obtaining specialized training in early childhood development is key to effective teaching.

In a diverse society, teachers must also reflect the ethnicities and languages of the families served and receive training that specifically expands their capacity to provide high quality culturally and linguistically competent care in the classroom.

- *Low-teacher child ratios and appropriate group sizes.*

In order to make such ratios possible, additional resources must be made available to ensure they can be met in low-income neighborhoods.

- *Age-appropriate curriculum* that supports all aspects of children's development—cognitive, physical, social and emotional—and capitalizes upon children's natural curiosity and the many ways in which children learn. It should take a holistic approach to ensuring children enter school with a strong foundation of knowledge about science, numeracy, mathematical thinking, language, literacy and vocabulary.

The curriculum must respect and reflect the child and family's home culture by using and adapting teaching strategies that are compatible with the child and family's home-life and context of everyday activity. The curriculum must create a safe, affirming learning environment that respects and recognizes the key role of a child's culture and language to his/her social-emotional and identity development, and supports young children in bridging across and integrating home and school contexts.¹⁵

- *Engaged parents* who are integrated into the overall program and regularly informed about their children's progress and developments.

In order to achieve this goal, programs must be equipped to

- *reach out to families across differences in ethnicity, language and class.*

- *treat parents with respect and as valuable sources of knowledge about child-rearing, especially when the practices of the home are different from mainstream culture.*
- *take an active role in helping parents develop the confidence and capacity to use their assets, including language and culture, to support their children's cognitive social-emotional, physical and literacy development at home.*
- *help parents, especially recently arrived immigrants, understand how the U.S. educational system works and develop the leadership skills they need to advocate on their children's behalf.*

- Well-designed facilities that, at a minimum, protect the health and safety of children and staff.

Such facilities should be easily accessible to low-income families, within their own communities, and reflect the community's culture in design and décor. Special attention should be paid to ensuring they are not built in locations where environmental toxins could have an adverse impact on the health of children and staff.

In addition, three more indicators of quality should be applied to early childhood programs serving children from low-income and/or ethnically diverse families:

- Comprehensive Services designed to ensure children and families can obtain other essential supports, including medical and dental care, social services, and, in some cases, developmental screenings. Such services must be linguistically accessible, culturally appropriate, affordable and conveniently located.
- Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Assessment that is authentic, ongoing, and includes multiple methods of gathering information. To ensure a complete understanding of each child's learning and development, both the home language and English learning should be assessed. Assessments also should include cognitive, social-emotional, and physical domains.¹⁶
- Bilingual education and services for children whose families are not primarily English-speaking

Programs need staff who can support children in the spoken and written language used in the home, as well as who can provide English language development. Research shows that if teachers in early childhood settings can communicate with children in their home language, they are more likely to establish close secure relationships with the children in their care.¹⁷ The presence of close relationships between children and teachers is an important predictor of how well children develop social skills as well as better classroom behavior.¹⁸ Furthermore, unless children from non-English speaking households receive strong support for their home language, their overall language development may be impeded and their likelihood of school success diminished.¹⁹

In a diverse society, quality programming requires paying even greater attention to the fact that children's school readiness is correlated with the support of strong families and strong communities. It involves recognizing and addressing the barriers that immigrants and traditionally marginalized ethnic groups face in maintaining strong ties to their children as their children become immersed in mainstream American cultural institutions – and ensuring that families have the resources to meet their basic needs and develop into strong, confident first teachers and life-long advocates for their children. Well-trained, culturally competent, ethnically and linguistically diverse teachers are an essential ingredient for making this happen.

III. WHERE ARE WE NOW? CURRENT DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE WORKFORCE

Data on the demographics of the current early childhood workforce show that the field is already fairly diverse. While preschool teachers are not as diverse as the field as a whole, they are more reflective of the demographics of children under five than those teachers in elementary and secondary education. See chart below.²⁰

Ethnicity of Early Childhood and K-12 Workforce in the U.S.

	White	African American	Latino	Asian/Other
Child Care Workers	63.6%	17.8%	16.5%	2.1%
Preschool Teachers	78%	10%	6%	2%
Elementary and Secondary Teachers	82.4%	15.2%	6.4%	1.7%

Data specific to practitioners working with infants and toddlers show that this group appears to be more reflective of the children served than early childhood educators. Early Head Start, for example, has done an exemplary job of hiring staff that mirror the ethnicity and language background of the children served. Like their clientele, Early Head Start child development staff are 42% White, 27% African American, 21% Latino, 3% Native American and 3% Asian or Pacific Islander. Twenty-three percent (23%) of its staff are also proficient in a language other than English, a number comparable to the percentage of children speaking a language other than English in the home.

Children between the ages of 0-2 not enrolled in Early Head Start may also be more likely to have culturally and ethnically congruent care as they are more likely to use family or relative care than center-based care. At least 26% of infants and toddlers (versus 14% of preschoolers) spend time in a family child care home and 46% (versus 27% of preschoolers) are cared for by relatives and neighbors (both paid and unpaid).²¹ Often located in the same neighborhood and connected by social networks, anecdotal information suggest that family child care providers as well as kith and kin caregivers frequently reflect the ethnic and linguistic background of children and their families, especially in low-income communities. Relative care (which is by definition reflective of a child's family) is especially common among African American and Latinos.²²

In order for the field of early childhood education to be culturally and linguistically competent, it needs to reflect the cultural background of the children and families it serves, especially since dialogue and interaction with peers of other backgrounds is a key strategy for helping individual teachers become more culturally competent. While a major strength of the current early care and education field appears to be its diversity, it still is not as diverse as the population it serves. For example, a recent survey of 117 state administrators of early childhood programs concluded that the lack of Latino or bilingual teachers (along with the lack of professional preparation) is one of the most urgent challenges in serving the Latino population.²³ It is critical that as the early childhood workforce expands, it become more diverse as well as more skilled.

IV. DEFINING THE PROBLEM: THE CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPING A DIVERSE, SKILLED WORKFORCE

As it seeks to adapt to new school readiness initiatives, the field of early childhood education is grappling with a number of troubling issues that could threaten its ability to retain and develop an effective and diverse workforce.

Key challenges include:

- Woefully poor teacher compensation is a major barrier to attracting, developing and retaining a diverse pool of qualified teachers who can offer high quality programs.
- Practitioners are not being adequately prepared to meet the needs and build upon the strengths of cultural, linguistic and racial minority children and families.
- The drive to professionalize the field seriously threatens the diversity of the early childhood workforce unless such professional development is coupled with realistic pathways for advancement for immigrants and people of color, especially from low-income communities.

Woefully inadequate teacher compensation is a major barrier to attracting, developing and retaining a diverse pool of qualified teachers who can offer high quality programs.

Poor teacher compensation has long been a major challenge for the field of early care and education. In 2004, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median annual salary of a child care workers was just under \$18,000,²⁴ while preschool teachers earned just under \$24,000. The vast majority of child care workers qualify as low-income or living in poverty.²⁵

Poor teacher compensation is extremely harmful to program quality. Low-teacher wages are directly correlated to increased rates of turnover. Poor salaries contribute to annual turnover rates often ranging between 25 to 50%. When turnover is high, programs must invest more in staff development because they must repeat training for new staff and do not realize the benefits of the training for the staff who leave.²⁶ The children also suffer. A constantly changing staff makes it difficult for children to form solid social and emotional relationships with the adults who have primary responsibility for them, often for a large portion of their waking hours. This is especially problematic for infants and toddlers in center-based settings.

Within the field of early education, differences in compensation is also a problem. Teacher salaries vary widely across the field. Publicly operated pre-kindergarten programs typically offer better pay and benefits than privately operated programs which are more dependent upon parent fees to cover costs.²⁷ Benefits such as health care, paid leave and retirement are typically unavailable outside

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of programs operated by the public schools. As a result, teachers working in private or non-profit programs, often leave those positions to work in public school settings which offer better benefits if not improved salaries.²⁸ The result can be a revolving door of early educators in which community-based settings lose their most experienced teachers who are then replaced by teachers with less experience.

The solution, however, cannot just focus on efforts to improve compensation only for preschool teachers, because doing so could have an adverse impact on the early childhood workforce working with infants and toddlers. If preschool jobs are available at better salaries, skilled teachers may be drawn away from working with younger children just as preschool teachers are often hired away into primary grade classrooms. Infant and toddler programs will also suffer if the policy simply focuses on expanding pre-school programs. When three- and four-year olds go elsewhere for pre-school programming, the centers or home care providers who rely upon funding provided for this age group to help cover the additional costs of infant and toddler care can suffer economically. The complex interplay among early childhood programs needs to be recognized and addressed as early childhood policy is developed, so that solutions do not end up “robbing Peter to pay Paul.”²⁹

Practitioners are not being adequately prepared to meet the needs and build upon the strengths of culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse children and families.

Hiring caregivers and teachers from the communities of the children served is important. But creating a high quality, ethnically diverse workforce requires more than just hiring from the community served. Early childhood staff of all backgrounds need professional development explicitly aimed at helping them understand and address issues related to diverse racial, cultural and linguistic experiences and their impact on the development of young children and families. They must be educated in the dynamics of difference in relating across cultural and ethnic lines.

Most teacher training programs do not require teachers to gain much knowledge about topics related to the education of children from communities of color and immigrant families. A study of college programs found that less than half of current BA-level early childhood programs required a course in working with ethnically diverse families and only ten percent required students take a course in working with bilingual children.³⁰ The Erikson Institute has found that, on average, the current bachelor's degree teacher program requires about 12% of the 67 semester hours of coursework to address issues related to diversity.³¹ This figure includes requirements for courses that explicitly use diversity terms in their titles and for courses that reference addressing diversity related topics in the course description. While it is encouraging to see that some attention is beginning to be paid to including issues of diversity in teacher training, the current level of preparation is far from adequate.

To prepare early childhood professionals to work with children from communities of color and immigrant families, standards and training programs should be immediately expanded to ensure deeper knowledge and competencies in:

- *Building Upon the Cultures of Families and Promoting Cross-Cultural Understanding Among Children*
- *Preserving Children's Family Language and Promoting Standard English Language Acquisition*
- *Fostering a Positive Sense of Racial Identity and Countering Prejudice Among Children*

Building Upon the Cultures of Families and Promoting Cross-Cultural Understanding Among Children.

Unfortunately, in the United States, many programs and practitioners consciously and unconsciously endorse practices that only reflect the values and ways of the dominant Anglo-European Christian culture³² even though cross-cultural studies provide evidence that there is a wide array of approaches from culture to culture in handling child-rearing tasks such as feeding, cuddling, diapering, and toilet training.³³

In order to be effective in ethnically diverse classrooms, teachers must understand how their own and mainstream culture influences their care-giving and educational approach. When teachers can form relationships with the child's parents and culture, the teacher is better able to understand the child and the contexts in which the child functions and resist assuming that a child-rearing practice is automatically bad because it isn't familiar or that characteristics of risk define a specific cultural or racial group. In addition, when teachers form relationships with parents, the parents are more likely to come to know the culture of the school. This interaction provides an opportunity for the adults to mediate the differences in context and build consistency for the child. Within the classroom, teachers should also know how to engage children in age-appropriate activities that validate the cultural backgrounds of children in their care and promote cross-cultural understanding. It is through this process that educators can dispel attitudes that leave them unable to appreciate the strengths, assets and love that parents bring to the task of teaching their children about the world.

Preserving Children's Family Language While Promoting Standard English Language Acquisition.

To be effective, teachers must become knowledgeable and skilled in a) the process of first and second language acquisition; b) effective teaching strategies for promoting bilingual development and acquisition of standard English and c) how to work with parents who don't speak English to provide the strongest possible language development and literacy base for their children. Wherever possible, early childhood educators should maintain or develop proficiency in communicating with children and their families in their native languages.

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To be effective, teachers must understand how bilingual development occurs in young people. For example, there is general agreement that young children learn language best in a language-rich environment through interactions with others. The best foundation for literacy is a rich foundation in language – not necessarily in English but in the language that is strongest for the child and his/her family. Bilingual education experts agree that being fully immersed in English is not the best way to prepare bilingual children for school and could even make it more difficult for youngsters to develop early literacy. Young children are in the process of developing cognitive skills that are not language specific-- for example, learning that a word on paper is a symbol of something that is spoken. It is easier for most children to learn such complex concepts in the language in which they are most comfortable – their home language. Once basic literacy concepts have been developed, children can more easily transfer this knowledge to a second language, such as English.³⁵

Teachers must also understand that ensuring children can speak the home language is critical to family communication because parents, especially if they are low-income, often have few chances to learn to speak English well even when they are highly motivated to do so. Language minority parents are often in jobs where talking is not important or English is not used. Working multiple jobs, parents have little time for English classes. As a result, when language minority children lose their family language, their parents often lose their ability to provide verbal comfort and support, offer guidance and discipline, or transmit family values, hopes and traditions. Parents find themselves feeling more and more inadequate and ineffective and children often grow alienated from their families, especially older family members who may not speak any English at all.³⁶

Teachers also need to be aware that the challenges facing African American children who use African American Vernacular English (AAVE) parallel those who speak entirely different languages even though they understand “standard” English. Like other languages, AAVE is a critical vehicle for the transmission of culture and for retaining a strong sense of connection to family and community. Speakers of AAVE also learn early on that the language of their home is not respected by the dominant culture. When African American children are constantly corrected or humiliated about their speech, the children can become silent, self-esteem can suffer, they develop shame about their family and heritage, and they can become quickly alienated from the school experience.³⁷ They also lose an important and rich source of expression and cultural connection.

Fostering a Positive Sense of Racial Identity and Countering Prejudice Among Children

Working effectively with young children starts with countering the widely accepted myth that young children are “color-blind”. Children can and do see differences at a very early age. Research shows that young infants notice differences in colors in inanimate objects³⁸ and recognize when faces are different in hue from the background against which they are presented.³⁹ Noticing differences is normal.

IV defining the problem: • • • • • the challenges of developing a diverse, skilled workforce

The challenge is that, as children grow older, their attitudes about the human differences they observe all too quickly begin to reflect adult prejudices that exist in our world. For more than fifty years, studies have shown that by the time children are three years old, they are already beginning to respond differently to people of varying skin color and other racial cues.⁴⁰ Even at this young age, children can already begin to demonstrate a preference for white values and images while exhibiting negative attitudes towards dark-skinned or black people and objects.

Teachers need to learn that they have a tremendous impact on how young children interpret and react to the differences that they notice between people. Adults teach children about how to understand difference through their words and actions. Children notice if adults speak disparagingly or positively about people of other backgrounds. When adults ignore or appear troubled by a child's cues of interest, they may convey that the child has stumbled upon something potentially unspeakable or worrisome.⁴¹ Professional development should provide teachers with the awareness and skills they need to help minority children develop a positive sense of self-identity and combat the development of biased attitudes among all children. While children are young, teachers have an unparalleled opportunity to teach children to value differences and ensure that they do not perceive themselves or others as less than because of a difference.⁴²

To effectively counter prejudice, teachers will need to learn more about how bias affects the context in which families and schools operate. They will need to recognize and understand the differences between how institutions versus individuals perpetuate and reinforce bias and how they can play a role in addressing both forms of discrimination.

What happens at home and while a child is with his/her teacher both have a tremendous impact on whether a child grows up with a strong sense of self, the ability to resist racism, and the knowledge and language to remain rooted in family and community. The success of any effort to instill these ideals in children depends upon caregivers and family members working together so their actions and words are complimentary not contradictory. When partnerships are strong, parents and teachers can draw upon each other's insights about a child's needs, strengths and experiences as well as knowledge of strategies and available resources. Being able to form these partnership with parents means that teachers must be able to develop trust and relationships across ethnic, cultural, and linguistic lines, feel comfortable asking questions related to diversity and respectfully negotiate differences of opinion.

These linguistic and cultural competencies need to be taught as a specific subject as well as integrated into the content and curriculum of courses dealing with topics such as child development or building family and community. Without an intentional focus, it is too easy for these concepts to be ignored or marginalized. At the same time, this information also needs to be woven into the content of

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other child development courses because issues of race, language, and culture have enormous implications for how teachers should approach helping an increasingly diverse population of children develop socially, emotionally and cognitively. Being grounded in concepts related to diversity greatly improves the odds that educators will be successful in preparing children to be successful in school and in their communities.

The drive to professionalize early childhood education seriously threatens the diversity of the field unless coupled with realistic pathways for advancement for immigrants and people of color, especially from low-income communities.

The field of early childhood education is facing growing policy pressures to increase educational requirements for teachers as a means to ensure program quality. In Head Start, the nation's largest early childhood and education program for low-income children, current law requires 50% of Head Start teachers to possess an associate's degree (AA). Federal lawmakers have indicated that the pending renewal of Head Start is likely to include a bachelor's degree requirement. In addition, 27 states now require bachelor's degrees (BA) for teachers working in state financed preschool programs.⁴³ BA requirements are typically a key element of current universal preschool proposals.

The push for a BA in early childhood education stems from several sources. The first is research that suggests that preschool teachers with BA level degrees, especially combined with specialized training in early childhood education, are more likely to offer higher quality care and improved child outcomes, especially with respect to language and vocabulary development.⁴⁴ Second, many policy-makers and advocates view BA's as an indicator of quality and a way to assure the general public that newly created preschool programs will be high quality and thus deserving of public funding. Third, some within the field of early education see BA degrees as an effective way to help the public recognize that early childhood educators are skilled professionals and compel improvements in salaries and working conditions.

While there is universal agreement that teachers should be well-trained, not everyone agrees that BAs should be used as the primary indicator of quality. Bruce Fuller and his colleagues from University of California, Berkeley point out that these findings could stem, not from the BA, but the prior backgrounds of the teachers that make them more likely to successfully complete college.⁴⁵ The research base has also generally not examined or recognized the interplay between ethnicity, culture and educational background as it relates to serving immigrant and minority children, nor whether the BA will provide the necessary training in ethnic and cultural diversity early childhood educators need.

Furthermore, in the absence of policies and efforts to address the barriers to access, the BA requirement could have a negative impact on the goal of creating the ethnically diverse, culturally competent workforce we need to meet the needs of

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children of low-income families, immigrant communities, and communities of color.

- *Institutions of higher education are generally poorly equipped to meet the growing demand for highly qualified preschool teachers.*
- *Few faculty have personal or professional expertise in working with children who are ethnic/cultural, or linguistic minorities*
- *The BA requirement may exclude people from low-income and ethnically diverse backgrounds.*
- *The BA requirement may not be the most effective way to compel improvements in salaries or working conditions.*
- *In states such as California, the demand for higher education is increasing far faster than available slots in the higher education system – raising concerns about accessibility and availability of BA programs.*

Institutions of higher education are poorly equipped to meet the growing demand for highly qualified preschool teachers.

The current system of higher education is woefully unprepared to expand the numbers of degreed and/or credentialed teachers. In the United States, only 29% or 1,255 of all Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) offer early childhood education programs. Researchers at the University of South Carolina estimate that a 76% increase in early childhood faculty would be needed if all current early childhood teachers were required to obtain a Bachelor's degree.⁴⁶

Although BA degrees are awarded by four year institutions, most of the expertise for providing training in early childhood development resides in community colleges which serve as the field's primary source of professional development. Because they are less expensive and often more geared to a working student population, the majority of early childhood educators currently turn to community colleges to take coursework in early childhood education.⁴⁷ This is particularly true of low income students, students of color and immigrants.

A lack of coordination and articulation between community colleges and four year BA granting institutions makes obtaining a BA degree even more challenging. Often, many of the credits that teachers earn while obtaining an associate degree are not accepted by Bachelor degree granting four year institutions. As a result students must often repeat course work which lengthens the time needed to obtain a BA degree and results in higher costs.

Few faculty have personal or professional expertise in working with children who are cultural, linguistic or ethnic minorities.

Another major challenge is equipping the faculty at institutions of higher education to be able to prepare teachers to work with children who are ethnic/cultural, or linguistic minorities. Few colleges and universities have staff who can bring their personal insight and knowledge about diversity to bear as they teach students of early childhood education. According to a recent study, the highest rated challenge

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facing early childhood programs in institutions of higher education is attracting and retaining ethnically and linguistically diverse faculty.⁴⁸ For example, in New Jersey, the faculty in five of the 12 four-year institutions offering early childhood degrees are entirely white. Among the community colleges, over 77% of the faculty are white. The rest are 10% African American, 3% Latino and less than 1% Asian.⁴⁹

In addition, the structure of early childhood programs makes it difficult to create mechanisms for providing college faculty with professional development to expand their knowledge of these topics. Early childhood programs tend to have high percentages of part-time faculty with little time for meetings or additional activities beyond teaching their classes. Yet, having time to learn about these issues related to the development of diverse children as well as effective strategies for incorporating it into the curriculum is essential.

The BA requirement may exclude people from low-income and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

While there is widespread consensus about the importance of increasing the quality of early childhood education and care, we are concerned about the potential adverse consequences of mandating an early childhood BA degree, especially if the requirement is implemented within a shortened time frame without adequate supports to ensure existing providers can further their education. Among preschool teachers today, approximately 50% currently have a B.A. Rates vary, however, across settings: while 87% of teachers employed in preschool programs operated by public schools have B.A.'s, this is true for only 54% of the teachers employed in programs operated by other public agencies or independent non-profits and 40% of Head Start teachers.⁵⁰

Comparative data on the diversity of graduates from college already show that Latino and African American are much less likely to have a B.A. degree in general. Although 30% of Whites hold a college degree, this is true of only 17% of African Americans and 11% of Latinos.⁵¹ One especially problematic result of these new education requirements is they could force out many current providers of color, and leave the field with even less capacity to provide culturally and linguistically competent and congruent care.

Low-income immigrant and minority teachers face significant barriers to successfully enrolling and completing a BA degree. Many teachers who immigrated to the United States may be able to speak English well but not yet easily read or write the English typically used in academic settings. In California, for instance, one in five community college students taking early childhood classes faces significant challenges completing the coursework in English.⁵² Low-income and minority teachers, especially if they represent the first generation attending college, may feel insecure about their ability to tackle college coursework. Often such students lack access to other family members or friends who can help them navigate this country's system of higher education.

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In states such as California, the demand for higher education is increasing far faster than available slots in the higher education system – raising concerns about accessibility and availability of BA programs.

Especially during this time of federal, state and local budget deficits, few institutions of higher education are prepared to provide low-income, minority and immigrant students with the supports that are so critical to helping them obtain a college degree.⁵³ For example, few institutions of higher education are equipped to provide limited English proficient students with courses in their home language or with specialized English language supports.⁵⁴ In addition, although institutions of higher education should ideally be able to provide counseling that could provide students with encouragement and access to good information, such support is increasingly scarce at colleges. For example, in the California Community Colleges, counselor to student ratios are extremely high, sometimes as much as 1:1200 students. This ratio continues to rise.⁵⁵

While student financial aid is critical to college enrollment and retention of low-income and minority students in any field,⁵⁶ it is especially essential for early childhood educators given the low-wages they typically earn which leaves little extra to cover the costs of tuition or pay back a student loan. Returning to school is especially challenging for adults who must balance the demands of going to college with competing employment and family responsibilities.⁵⁷ While a limited amount of scholarships and financial assistance is available through Pell Grants and other means, early care and education students are often uninformed about or sometimes excluded from financial aid programs.⁵⁸ Moreover, as tuition continues to rise much more quickly than family income throughout the nation, many college students are increasingly relying upon student loans to cover their educational debts.⁵⁹ Student loans are the most common source of financing for low-income students.⁶⁰ Such a strategy, especially without loan forgiveness programs, is a very risky proposition for early childhood teachers given that the low-wages of the field make paying back loans extremely difficult.

Such an exclusionary situation would have an adverse economic impact on low income minority communities. Early childhood care and education jobs have long been a major source of stable employment for people living in low-income neighborhoods, especially women, because prior training or credentials are not required to work in these positions. Although those early childhood jobs typically do not pay well, they currently provide meaningful employment opportunities for those committed to helping their community.

The BA requirement may not be the most effective way to compel improvements in salaries or working conditions.

The BA requirement is designed to increase salaries in a deplorably underpaid field. Currently, preschool teachers often earn less than half of the salary of a public school teacher.⁶¹ Research already suggests that students studying early

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childhood are more likely to go on to elementary school teaching than stay in early education if they earn a bachelor's degree.⁶² A BA requirement could help to create much needed parity in teacher compensation.

However, staff turnover will become even more of a problem if public policies raise teacher education requirements to a BA but do not ensure they are paid salaries equal to their peers who teach kindergarten. Retaining BA-level pre-school teachers would be extremely difficult unless they earn close to their peers working in elementary schools, but this would require major increases to the financing of existing programs.

The emphasis on a formal academic degree also will make it more difficult for the field to recognize the work of current early childhood professionals especially the contributions of immigrants and cultural and ethnic minorities, who provide high quality teaching as a result of years of classroom experience rather than formal, traditional academic training. A study of predominantly African American and Latino teachers by Carollee Howes and her colleagues found that better, more responsive teaching could be predicted when teachers were mentored early in their careers, received on-going supervision and were committed to staying in the field because they felt it benefited their community.⁶³ The BA is not the only pathway to high quality education.

V. CREATING A SCAFFOLD FOR QUALITY

The demand for highly qualified early childhood teachers who can effectively foster school readiness among an increasingly diverse population of young children is enormous. Policy makers and the early childhood field face an unprecedented challenge and unique opportunity to put in place a coherent system and infrastructure for promoting the development of the early childhood workforce.

Given the size of the demand, such a system needs to leverage the knowledge and skills of the current workforce rather than displace long-standing teachers who have the capacity to offer high quality care, especially to culturally and linguistically diverse populations, even if they do not have a degree. The system will need to incorporate stronger content in standards and training regarding culturally and linguistically appropriate teaching, and must include strategies for improving the working conditions of the early childhood workforce. It should offer alternative pathways for the existing workforce to obtain specialized training in early childhood education and move toward an AA or BA degree while also attracting and preparing new people to become high quality, culturally and linguistically competent early childhood education professionals.

Since putting such a system in place will take time, investments in building this new system must support efforts to more immediately improve teaching quality through specialized early childhood education training. Such a two-pronged system is important because even if BA's are mandated for lead teachers, less credentialed child care professionals will still have a major role in providing care and education. In general, most public preschool initiatives being developed today are structured with at least a goal of a BA level-teacher and a teaching assistant. A more coherent system would allow teachers to take classes that address their immediate needs for professional development and that would count towards credits that could be applied towards an AA or BA degree in early childhood. These kinds of classes would be valuable even for teachers who already have their BA degree. As professionals, teachers will want and need to constantly update their skills and some will want to make up for deficits in the coursework currently offered in college-level teacher preparation programs.

This section offers a set of principles that policymakers, institutions of higher education and programs can use to construct multiple pathways and a scaffold that will support the development of a highly qualified, bilingual, multicultural early childhood workforce. Not intended to be used individually, these principles should be used together to develop effective national, state and local infrastructure and policies.

- Redefine the core competencies for providing high quality early care and education to include effectively addressing the development and learning needs of ethnic, minority, linguistic minority, and foreign-born children.

- Invest in multiple delivery systems and alternative pathways that help teachers, especially from under-represented backgrounds, further their education. A key component is ensuring articulation between non-credit granting training, two and four year degree programs.
- Build capacity within community colleges, four year colleges and training institutions to provide effective coursework and training for quality early childhood education appropriate to an increasingly diverse population of young children.
- Provide adequate resources, support and time for people (and particularly low-income, non-traditional and immigrant students) to pursue and successfully complete the pathways towards a degree.
- Link the creation of new workforce standards with the financing of the early childhood system and appropriate compensation levels that support the retention of a high quality, well trained early childhood education workforce.
- Monitor and track the impact of professionalization policies on the diversity of the early childhood education workforce

Redefine the core competencies for providing high quality early care and education to specifically address the needs of cultural, linguistic and racial minority children.

Redefining core competencies to include expertise in addressing issues of culture, language and racial bias is essential. Unless the importance of these concepts is more explicitly recognized by current standards, many early childhood teachers are likely to assume they do not need to study these concepts. Unaware of the cultural differences in child-rearing approaches or how language acquisition occurs differently when children are from families who speak languages other than English, some teachers may simply not recognize the need for learning about these topics. Changing these core competencies helps to ensure that all teacher training programs begin to develop the capacity and the faculty to educate students about these concepts.

Unless core competencies are redefined, additional early childhood degrees do not ensure providers have the skills to provide high quality teaching for all children, especially those from marginalized ethnic and linguistic minorities and foreign born families.

Updated core competencies can also play an important role in helping to honor the rich knowledge and skills that educators, especially immigrants and people from diverse backgrounds, may bring because of their life experiences. They can give institutions of higher education the rationale for creating mechanisms to recognize and give credit to teachers when they possess skills and knowledge related to diversity (e.g. competency in speaking another language, knowing how to effectively code switch between two cultural environments, deep knowl-

edge of the values and child-rearing practices of more than one ethnic group.) Redefined core competencies could also be used to improve current tools and approaches for assessing teaching and program quality. A frequent critique of common tools, like the Environmental Rating Scales, is they are culturally biased and don't recognize when teachers and programs engage in teaching styles and approaches effective with immigrant and minority children.⁶⁴

Invest in multiple delivery systems and alternative pathways to quality teaching that help teachers, especially from under-represented backgrounds, further their education and participate in training opportunities from their first entry-point into work in early childhood care and education.

Multiple delivery systems and alternative pathways to quality teaching are essential to retaining minority and immigrant staff and promoting their participation in higher education. A key component is ensuring articulation between non-credit granting training and professional development (which is often most accessible to people entering the field especially as kith and kin providers or operators of family child care homes), community colleges, and four-year degree programs in colleges and universities. Such a system must recognize the importance of helping professionals to obtain specialized early childhood training (including topics related to serving diverse populations) that can have an immediate impact on the quality of their teaching and caregiving while also encouraging them to seek out formal education opportunities that can lead to AA and BA.

Community colleges will play an extremely critical role in the creation of alternative pathways because they operate the vast majority of early childhood professional development programs and also have a long-track record for reaching out to non-traditional and under-represented student populations. They are much more accessible than four-year colleges because they are more affordable and often more conveniently located near low-income communities. They can only do such outreach work, however, if adequately funded.

To create these multiple pathways, policy makers and program developers can build upon the successful experience of the Child Development Associate (CDA) program. Operated by the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, the CDA program is a one-year program that combines formal educational course work with supervised field experience. When community members and parents participate (30% of the individuals who have earned a CDA started out as Head Start parents) in the CDA program, it serves as an important bridge to formal college course work.⁶⁵ In New Jersey, colleges now give students 9-15 college credits if they have obtained a CDA.

It also is essential to construct training and professional development opportunities to fit the time, space, and opportunity that current care providers have available for training. Flexible in-service training options that are incorporated into current work settings have shown promise in reaching care providers who cannot devote non-work hours to training or whose background of experiences with traditional education systems makes such training unlikely to be effective.

Whenever possible, these trainings should be offered in settings and languages that match those of the child care workers. Professional development activities work best if those upon whom the training is focused participate in the design, which is particularly critical in addressing issues of culture and language.

Build capacity within community colleges, four-year colleges and training institutions to provide effective coursework and training for quality early childhood education appropriate to an increasingly diverse population of young children.

Additional resources and thoughtful planning is critical to addressing the current lack of capacity within institutions of higher education. As discussed earlier, colleges lack capacity to meet overall demand for coursework and they lack faculty with the expertise to provide coursework to prepare teachers to address the needs of an increasingly diverse population of young children and families. Resources are needed to expand and recruit early childhood faculty, especially with personal and professional experience in working with immigrant families and ethnic minorities. If the goal is to increase pathways to early childhood degree programs that include BAs, four-year institutions as well as community colleges will need to become involved in growing and revamping the current system of professional development. Partly because BA's have not been required to date, many four year institutions have historically not viewed early education as part of their purview.⁶⁶

Provide adequate resources, support and time for people (particularly non-traditional students) to pursue and successfully complete the pathways towards a degree.

Adequate resources, support and time are critical to ensuring that immigrants and people from ethnic minorities can pursue and successfully obtain AA and BA degrees in early childhood. As discussed earlier, many students must combine higher education with other work and family responsibilities. Most have few financial resources to cover the costs of formal education and many feel intimidated about pursuing further education, especially since they may have limited academic skills as well as few mentors or role models who can help them navigate this country's complex system of higher education. Research on the T.E.A.C.H program (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) suggests that early childhood teachers going to school part-time need an average of five years to obtain an AA degree.⁶⁷ BAs are likely to take twice that amount of time. For teachers struggling to simultaneously gain academic proficiency in English or remediate weak academic skills, the time line can be even longer. It makes a tremendous difference when students have access to scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, credits for work experiences, and other programs that offer financial aid, provide credits for experience, and support for completing an academic program.

Link the creation of new workforce standards with the financing of the early childhood system and put in place appropriate compensation levels that support retaining and attracting high quality, well trained, diverse early childhood education workforce.

Unless fair and adequate levels of compensation can be established for early childhood educators, increased teaching requirements will merely lead to

further turnover in the field and cause a decline rather than improvement in the quality of programs and their ability to support “ready” children. A key component of establishing appropriate compensation is clearly outlining the qualifications of the different positions within the field (e.g. teachers, assistant teachers, directors, home-based providers) and setting salary guidelines that reward professionals when they obtain additional education. Currently, although some systems and agencies have career ladders accompanied by appropriate levels of compensation, no such guidelines operate across programs. As a result, there is no mechanism to guarantee that a teacher will be financially rewarded if s/he obtains additional education. To ensure the field can attract individuals with needed skills, it may also want to consider financially rewarding individuals who can teach bilingually. Such strategies have been used before by public schools.

Government policy can play a key role in improving salaries. For example, in 1989, the Military Child Care Act mandated increases in compensation tied to training and education. Over the next five years, teachers saw a 17% increase in real wages and a 50% decrease in annual turnover.⁶⁸ Clearly, higher wages will only be possible if the mechanism for financing them is built directly into policies that dictate the financing of the system, including how states determine funding for universal preschool.

Monitor and track the impact of professionalization policies on the diversity of the early childhood education workforce

Establishing and maintaining a system for tracking and monitoring the impact of professionalizing policies on the demographics of the field is essential given growing concerns that they may push out many teachers of color and immigrants. Currently, while some of this information is tracked within programs, e.g. Head Start or programs operated through school districts, no tracking system exists for the field as whole. Data available on the ethnicity and linguistic composition of the workforce has been derived instead from surveys conducted in the field by research institutions. There is no guarantee that resources are available to conduct them again. Collecting data on a regular basis is essential for monitoring trends over time and detecting whether mid-course changes in policies or programs are needed to prevent and reduce growing inequities.

The experience of the *Abbot* preschool programs in New Jersey illustrates why such data collection is so essential. In 1998, the New Jersey Supreme Court in *Abbot vs. Burke* required the establishment of full-day, high quality universal preschool programs in targeted school districts. In 2000, the court clarified that standards for high quality programming required teachers in both school and community-based programs to obtain a bachelor's degree and early childhood certification over a four year period. To support this mandate, New Jersey provided a full-tuition scholarship to teachers pursuing their degrees along with a central clearinghouse to administer this financial aid. Partnering with private foundations, the state also provided grants to help build the capacity of colleges to provide early care and education courses. State funds also were used to create

a substitute teacher pool to give teachers release time to attend school. Because New Jersey appears to be very close to meeting this mandate, it is widely cited as evidence that a workforce of BA degree teachers can be achieved. Since 1999, the percent of teachers in community-based programs with BA degrees has increased from 35% to 80%.⁶⁹

While these results are promising, the state has failed to collect data on the ethnic or racial backgrounds of the teachers who have successfully acquired a bachelor's degree as a result of *Abbot* or even who has taken advantage of the available scholarships. As a result, it is not clear who makes up the 80% of teachers with BA degrees. Anecdotal evidence suggests that seasoned teachers are leaving the field or accepting demotions because of the new mandates. Although the purpose of *Abbot vs. Burke* was to address educational disparities, New Jersey has not put in place the mechanisms to ensure new inequities are not created by the new system it is establishing.⁷⁰

VI. Recommendations

To implement these principles, we make the following recommendations that show readers how they can make a difference by building upon and strengthening the existing infrastructure. While we are aware that there are already some promising examples of how people, agencies and government in various places throughout the country are working on different aspects of these recommendations, the current level of work is still far from sufficient. We urge readers to help take these recommendations to scale and integrate them into common practice. If the field acts now, we have an opportunity to ensure efforts to raise teacher qualifications can lead to higher quality for all children and do not adversely impact the diversity of the field.

I: Local Government should work together with training institutions (community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, resource and referral agencies, and other community-based training institutions) and child care agencies (school districts, head start grantees, non-profit providers, family child care providers) to:

1. *Collect and analyze data on the ethnicity, language background, educational status, wages, benefits and tenure of the current early childhood workforce 0-5.* Data should be broken down by position as well as the type of program, age group and diversity of the group served. This information should then be used to identify which groups are most under-represented, do not reflect the diversity of the community they serve, and require the greatest levels of additional professional development and support. It can also be used to identify the greatest disparities in salaries and benefits.
2. *Work with state government to coordinate and provide aggressive outreach and access to financial assistance to help foreign-born and ethnic minority early childhood professionals to continue with their education.* Local government and its community partners are well-positioned to ensure that under-represented groups are targeted for outreach efforts. To be effective, outreach should be coupled with easy access to financial assistance to cover the costs of obtaining more education including tuition, childcare support, book stipends, transportation. If possible, local government should provide additional resources to pay for costs not covered by state or federal funding sources.
3. *Develop comprehensive career ladder programs for childcare workers and teachers that offer social, financial and economic supports.* As part of these programs, it will be critical to:
 - a. Use information about wages and benefits to determine how to use local resources to strategically address disparities in compensation. While clearly this needs to happen at multiple levels, particularly through state and federal policies, localities can also use local funding to provide wage augmentation

to targeted groups, e.g. infant/toddler providers or teachers working in community-based settings. Local governments allocating resources expanding early care and education should build in incentive structures that reward additional education and reduce inequities across child care settings.

- b. Arrange for early childhood education staff to pursue at least part of their education through in-service activities rather than expecting workers to get their training and credentialing by participating in classes occurring outside their working hours and the context of their programs.
 - c. Create opportunities for cohorts of child care workers to advance as a group and offer each other peer support and assistance in achieving their educational goals.
 - d. Link teachers to mentors who can offer them encouragement and advice about how to pursue their early childhood interests.
 - e. Bring master teachers directly into classrooms to monitor and model high quality culturally competent and relevant teaching practices.
4. *Assess the extent to which local training institutions currently offer a) classes and supports for professionals who are most comfortable learning in languages other than English and b) courses aimed at better equipping early childhood professionals to meet the needs of diverse children.* Such an assessment should determine availability, accessibility, and whether or not current courses are unit-bearing. The results should be used to identify priority targets for expanding classes or creating new courses. California is home to several examples of how this can occur. In San Francisco, one component of its newly established universal preschool initiative is funding the local community college to develop and provide training on bilingual language development and second language acquisition for young children. In Alameda County, two community colleges and one community-based training agency are working together to provide additional supports to professionals still learning English to obtain their BA degrees.
 5. *Increase access to professional development for family child care providers.* Support the development of training networks where family child care homes are linked to each other and a coordinating center-based child care facility. Local government should also ensure that family child care providers are included in aggressive outreach strategies and the development of a more comprehensive wage and career ladder system. Members of the family child care community should be brought together to offer advice about how their needs can best be met as these components are developed.
 6. *Reach out to kith and kin providers:* Information about and access to child care training and educational opportunities should be extended to the kith and kin providers who care for a substantial portion of young children. Such information can help expand the quality of care they offer and ensure they are aware of career opportunities should they choose to pursue them.

II. Institutions of Higher Education (community colleges, four year institutions, universities) should work together and with community-based training providers to:

1. *Build internal capacity to provide teachers with the skills to work effectively within-creasingly diverse children and families.* They should
 - a. Expand recruitment and hiring of faculty from under-represented populations.
 - b. Invest in professional development for faculty to build their skills and knowledge of the impact of bilingualism, cultural diversity, racial identity and bias on child development and learning.
 - c. Increase capacity by encouraging faculty to co-teach classes to take advantage of the knowledge of instructors who do have expertise and qualifications in bilingual language development or have worked with children and families from ethnic minority backgrounds. If such expertise does not exist among the education and child development faculty, consider teaming with colleagues with expertise in related fields working in other departments.
 - d. Expand requirements and the availability of course work specifically addressing topics related to working with culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse children and their families. Obtain input from teachers already working in the field to help ensure that the design of these new courses is meaningful and relevant to their questions and experiences.
 - e. Take steps to ensure topics related to diversity are integrated as effectively as possible into all basic child development coursework.
2. *Improve articulation between training institutions.* They should
 - a. Standardize articulation between two- and four-year degree programs by identifying and eliminating barriers to articulation (e.g. problems that stem from inconsistencies in course titles and names of degree programs).
 - b. Build upon the CDA. Wherever CDA training is organized, offer it for college credits that are transferable to degree programs. When new degree programs track early childhood programs in two year institutions, create within them preparation for the CDA credential.
 - c. Create linkage agreements between credit-granting and noncredit-granting training organizations that ensure when teachers participate in professional development they receive credits that can be applied to AA or BA degrees.
3. *Make higher education more accessible, especially to low-income immigrant and minority teachers.* They should
 - a. Provide training on-site in centers, in programs, in communities and within normal work schedules, where appropriate.
 - b. Offer courses bilingually combined with supports to strengthen English skills and ensure access to course materials and content.
 - c. Ensure courses are available in evenings and on weekends. Consider condensed scheduling so students can complete semester coursework in shorter time

- periods and pilot the use of on-line distance learning.
- d. Invest in dedicated career and academic counselors knowledgeable about early childhood certification issues and versed in addressing challenges faced by adults with limited proficiency in English. To increase their accessibility, such counselors should also spend time outstationed at community sites like large child care facilities where they would be more accessible to child care workers.
- e. Create mechanisms for teachers to get college credit for relevant life and work experiences (e.g. the ability to speak a second language, extensive experience working in a child care setting).

III. State and Federal Policy Makers should:

1. *Create a professional development commission at the national level to define core competencies needed to deliver high quality, culturally responsive and competent early childhood education and identify effective ways of assessing the quality of teaching by teachers of diverse backgrounds.* In addition to representatives from key associations (e.g. NAEYC) and state level credentialing groups, the commission must include ethnically diverse researchers and practitioners with significant experience working with diverse populations including those operating at the grassroots level. To ensure this process moves along in an expedient manner, the federal government should fund a research team to conduct a comprehensive review of the research and propose initial outcome-based requirements for early childhood teacher preparation that meet the needs of our country's growing diversity. The results of this commission should eventually be integrated into emerging state level teaching standards.
2. *Institute state level systems for tracking the composition of the early childhood workforce.* This system should collect data on the ethnic background and language status of teachers in different positions: who leaves the system, who is successful at remaining, which students are progressing towards degree attainment, and which students are accessing available scholarships and utilizing financial aid. These systems should ensure data is accessible to researchers, training institutions and other outside organizations interested in monitoring the impact of increased training standards on the diversity of the workforce. Interagency data exchange and collaboration should be encouraged.
3. *Support the development of state infrastructure for coordinating training resources, developing training program standards and curricula, promoting aggressive outreach and recruitment, and evaluating effectiveness of programs.* A state entity to oversee the development of state infrastructure should be charged with strengthening the delivery models of training, targeting training to areas of greatest need and ensuring this work is coordinated with K-12 professional development efforts.

The work of this entity should be informed by assessments conducted in each state of the capacity of institutions of higher education to prepare an expanded and better trained ECE Workforce. These assessments should include an examination of pedagogy, course offerings and levels of investment and coordination to meet the growing demand,⁷² and institutional diversity practices and the diversity of faculty.

Such an entity can also guide and support local and statewide efforts to a) engage in linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach and recruitment to encourage under-represented groups continue their education and b) recognize the credentials of individuals with ECE training and education acquired in countries outside the United States. It should establish an advisory committee of minority ECE professionals to advise on effective strategies for recruiting and retaining a diverse pool of teachers.

4. *Expand the capacity of community colleges and four year institutions to meet the demand for better trained, more highly credentialed teachers who reflect the diversity of the children served and have the skills to promote the well-being of all children especially children from immigrant families and low-income communities of color.*

Federal and state government are a critical source of funding to:

- a. Update and revamp early childhood courses to better reflect the newly defined skills and competencies teachers need to provide high quality teaching in a diverse society.
 - b. Increase the ability of IHEs to hire a more diverse faculty with the skills to engage and support the development of teachers from under-represented backgrounds, especially those learning English or feeling intimidated by the formal education system.
 - c. Provide targeted early childhood programs for professionals with limited proficiency in English.
5. *Offer financial assistance or loan forgiveness programs to cover the costs of obtaining more education.* Typical costs include tuition, childcare support, book stipends, and transportation. Examples of promising efforts to do so include the New Jersey Abbot preschool programs which covered the costs of tuition, TEACH in North Carolina, and CARES in California which offers financial stipends to teachers obtaining additional education.
 6. *Improve teacher compensation and reward teachers for obtaining teacher education.*
 - a. Build incentive structures that provide higher salaries for teachers with degrees into any new proposals for expanding resources for early care and education, especially universal preschool initiatives.
 - b. Invest in efforts to create parity in compensation between teachers in community-based settings and those in public schools.

IV. Early Childhood Advocacy Groups and Professional Associations should:

1. *Ensure diversity is explicitly included as a topic in recommended early childhood teaching standards.* For some groups, like NAEYC, which already have statements on working with diverse children, this task may simply involve making these competencies a more explicit component of their guidance on teacher standards.
2. *Create and support opportunities to improve the cultural appropriateness of commonly used tools for assessing the quality of child care programs and teaching.* Making these revisions is important for ensuring that the field acknowledges (and does not devalue) the work of professionals who incorporate ethnicity, culture and language into their approach to educating young children.
3. *Advocate for the collection of local, state and federal data on the demographics of the field.* Over time, use this data to hold agencies accountable for creating pathways for advancement for under-represented groups.
4. *Identify and publicize success stories and promising practices for maintaining diversity of the early childhood workforce as standards rise.* Throughout the country, a handful of organizations and people are starting to take action to create pathways for advancement for under-represented groups. Having opportunities to learn more about success and lessons learned can help to accelerate the speed with which such practices can be broadly adopted.

Summary

A major impetus behind current school readiness initiatives is reducing educational disparities and ensuring all children enter school ready to learn. This intent, however, will not be realized unless significant resources are invested in developing a more effective system of higher education, training, and professional development that ensures pathways for advancement for people of color and immigrants and prepares all teachers to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of young children. Done well, this work also can provide needed economic and community development opportunities for neighborhoods with the greatest needs. This paper is a call for policymakers, institutions of higher education, and early childhood programs and professional associations to work together to ensure early childhood teachers can be successful in helping young children of all backgrounds gain the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills they need to do well in school and in life.

Footnotes

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