



Comparison of Personnel Systems for K-12 and Early Childhood Teachers: Qualifications and Compensation¹

	K-12		Early Care and Education (ECE)	
System/Structure	The K-12 education system is composed of public schools (traditional and charter) and private schools. The vast majority of K-12 teachers work in public schools.		The ECE system is more diverse and complex than the K-12 system. Children receive services in schools, centers, and homes, ² and the system is largely funded privately through parent fees, although providers may receive federal (e.g., Head Start) or state (e.g., pre-K) funds.	
	During the 2011-12 school year, there were an estimated 3.85 million teachers in elementary and secondary schools; 88% taught in public (including charter) schools, and approximately 12% taught in private schools. ³		Among the one million teachers ⁴ in center-based programs, 6% were employed in school-sponsored programs, ⁵ 14% worked in Head Start-funded programs, ⁶ 21% were employed in publicly funded pre-K programs that were not school sponsored, ⁷ and 59% worked in the remaining center-based programs. ⁸	
Demographic Characteristics	K-12 teachers are typically female, represent a range of age groups, and are predominantly white.		ECE teachers are almost exclusively female, represent a range of age groups, and are ethnically diverse, reflecting the racial/ethnic composition of the child population to a greater extent than K-12 teachers.	
	Public	Gender: 76% female; 24% male. ⁹	All Center-Based	Gender: 98% female; 2% male. ¹⁰
		Age: 15% were 29 years old or younger; 54% were 30-49 years old; 31% were 50 or older. ¹¹		Age: 28% were 29 years old or younger; 46% were 30-49 years old; 26% were 50 or older. ¹²
		Race/ethnicity: 82% were white; 7% were black; 8% were Hispanic; and 3% were of other ethnicities. ¹³		Race/ethnicity: 63% were white; 17% were black; 14% were Hispanic; and 5% were of other ethnicities. ¹⁴
Educational Attainment	K-12 teacher qualifications are relatively uniform, with the vast majority holding at least a bachelor's degree.		ECE teacher qualifications vary widely, based on program type and funding requirements - from little or no education to a bachelor's degree or higher.	
	Public	96% of public school teachers held at least a bachelor's degree in 2011-12. ¹⁵ 56% held a master's degree, at least. ¹⁶	School-Sponsored	58% BA, at least; 19% MA or higher. ¹⁷
			Head Start	62% BA, at least. ¹⁸
			Public Pre-K (not school sponsored)	36% BA, at least; 10% MA or higher. ¹⁹
			Other Center-Dased	34% BA, at least; 8% MA or higher. ²⁰

Qualification Requirements: Education and Certification²⁰

K-12		Early Care and Education (ECE)	
<p>Educational requirements are relatively uniform across districts and states. K-12 teachers are usually required to have at least a bachelor's degree and provisional or actual certification before they begin teaching.</p> <p>Preparation programs, as required by policy in most states, routinely include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Focus on pedagogy and subject matter content (e.g., math, science, and reading); and 2) Field and student-teaching experiences.²² <p>Typically, successful completion of approved degree or credential programs aligns directly with certification requirements.</p> <p>For public school teachers, pre-service preparation is typically followed by induction and ongoing professional development.</p>		<p>ECE teacher qualification requirements vary widely across states, based on program type and funding requirements – from little or no education to a bachelor's degree.</p> <p>Individual state teacher certification is uncommon for lead teachers, except for those who work in public pre-K programs.²³ Certification is not routinely linked to successful completion of a degree in many states.</p> <p>Many ECE teachers do not participate in pre-service education. As a result of rising qualifications for teaching staff in Head Start, state pre-K, and quality rating and improvement systems (QRISs), many ECE teachers attend a college or university to complete required credits or earn degrees while employed.²⁴</p> <p>Since many ECE teachers enter the workforce with little or no pre-service training or education, their first teaching job typically doubles as “fieldwork,” but rarely with the formal structure of supervision that this term implies.²⁵</p> <p>In ECE, “professional development” is a catchall phrase covering nearly the entire spectrum of education and training – from introductory training, to informal workshops or other continuing education, to college-level work for credit or a degree.²⁶ Many ECE settings do not have a continuing education requirement for teachers.</p>	
Public	Public school teachers must be licensed or certified through traditional or alternative programs recognized by the state. ²⁷	State-Funded Pre-K	In 23 states, a bachelor's degree is required for all lead pre-K teachers; 14 states require a bachelor's for pre-K teachers but only for those in certain types of programs or settings (e.g., public schools). ²⁸ Most state-funded pre-K programs require certification, licensure, or endorsement; some require the same licensure for pre-K teachers as for early elementary teachers. ²⁹
Charter	Only 23 states require all charter school teachers to be licensed or certified through traditional or alternative programs; 14 states require only a certain percentage of teachers in a charter school to be licensed or certified; four states and the District of Columbia leave decisions about licensure or certification to the individual charter school. ³⁰	Head Start ³⁰	At least 50% of Head Start teachers nationwide must have a bachelor's or advanced degree in Early Childhood Education, or a bachelor's or advanced degree in any subject and coursework equivalent to a major related to early childhood education, along with experience teaching preschool-age children. ³² No experience is required for teachers with an AA, BA, or higher degree in ECE. Degrees in other fields require experience, as determined by grantee.
Private	Private school teachers are not typically required to be certified or licensed.	Other Center-Based	Ten states require at least a Child Development Associate™ (CDA) or completion of a substantive vocational program for center-based lead teachers. Most states require only a high school diploma, some training, or in some cases, nothing at all. Ten states have no requirements for center-based lead teachers. ³³

		K-12	Early Care and Education (ECE)	
Compensation	<p>Uniform pay scales are established by local public school districts.</p> <p>Employer-offered health and retirement benefits are included in pay packages provided to the vast majority of public school teachers.³⁴</p> <p>K-12 teachers typically work a 10-month year.</p>		<p>Pay varies dramatically within and across sectors, and formal pay scales are uncommon.³⁵</p> <p>One-quarter of ECE teachers were estimated to have no health coverage prior to full implementation of the Affordable Care Act; those covered may receive insurance through a spouse, public agency, or employer.³⁶</p> <p>ECE teachers in state-funded pre-K and Head Start programs typically work a 10-month year, while teachers in most other ECE center-based programs (e.g., child care) work a 12-month year. ECE teachers are predominantly full-time workers.³⁷</p>	
	Public	2011-12 Mean base salary: \$53,100 ³⁸	School-sponsored	All: \$40,560 (\$19.50/hour). ³⁹ Teachers with a BA: \$48,464 (\$23.30/hour).
	Charter	Two-thirds of charter schools offer pay similar to public schools; some pay higher salaries for teaching in hard-to-staff schools and subjects. ⁴⁰	Head Start	All: \$29,952 (\$14.40/hour). ⁴¹ Teachers with a BA: \$35,776 (\$17.20/hour).
	Private	2011-12 Average base salary: \$40,200, or approximately three-quarters of public school teacher pay (76%).	Pre-K (Not School Sponsored)	All: \$26,832 (\$12.90/hour). Teachers with a BA: \$37,232 (\$17.90/hour).
Unionization	<p>Union membership rate: 49% for all elementary and middle school teachers.⁴²</p>		Other Center-Based	All: \$25,376 (\$12.20/hour). Teachers with a BA: \$33,072 (\$15.90/hour).
			School-Sponsored	Union membership rate: 44%. ⁴³
			Head Start	Union membership rate: 15%.
			Pre-K (Not School Sponsored)	Union membership rate: 14%.
			Other Center-Based	Union membership rate: 4%.

Endnotes

- 1 One of the best data sources on the K-12 teacher workforce is the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), which has been conducted regularly since 1987. We use data from SASS 2011–12 to compare with the most recent national survey on ECE in the United States: the 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE). While there are other data sources that provide more recent data on some teacher characteristics, such as the Current Population Survey (CPS), the SASS and NSECE provide more detailed information due to their respective focuses on the K-12 and ECE workforces, rather than on the U.S. population or workforce as a whole, as in the CPS. Similarly, the Occupational Employment Survey (OES) provides more recent salary data but does not include information on other teacher characteristics, nor does it allow for nuanced distinctions within the field, particularly for ECE.
- 2 Home-based providers make up a substantial proportion of the ECE workforce but were excluded from this analysis for reasons of space and data comparability. For more information on these providers, see: National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (NSECE) (2016). *Characteristics of Home-Based Early Care and Education Providers: Initial Findings from the National Survey of Early Care and Education*. OPRE Report #2016-13. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/characteristics_of_home_based_early_care_and_education_toopre_032416.pdf.
- 3 National Center for Education Statistics (2013). Table 209.10 Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, by selected teacher characteristics: Selected years, 1987–88 through 2011–12. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_209.10.asp.
- 4 Our use of the term ECE teachers refers to all center-based ECE teaching staff, including assistant teachers and aides.
- 5 A public school district had administrative oversight or reporting requirements or funds the program.
- 6 At least one child was funded by Head Start dollars, but the center-based program was not school sponsored.
- 7 At least one child was funded by public pre-K dollars, but the center-based program was not school sponsored, and no Head Start funding was reported.
- 8 See National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2013). *Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings, National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)*. OPRE Report #2013-38. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nsece_wf_brief_102913_0.pdf.
- 9 National Center for Education Statistics (2012). Table 2. Average and median age of public school teachers and percentage distribution of teachers, by age category, sex, and state: 2011–12. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass112_2013314_t1s_002.asp.
- 10 CSCCE analysis of NSECE data.
- 11 National Center for Education Statistics (2012). Table 2. Average and median age of public school teachers and percentage distribution of teachers, by age category, sex, and state: 2011–12. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass112_2013314_t1s_002.asp.
- 12 CSCCE analysis of NSECE data as reported in Whitebook, M., McLean, C., & Austin, L.J.E. (2016). *Early Childhood Workforce Index – 2016*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley.
- 13 National Center for Education Statistics (2012). Table 1. Total number of public school teachers and percentage distribution of school teachers, by race/ethnicity and state: 2011–12. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass112_2013314_t1s_001.asp.
- 14 CSCCE analysis of NSECE data as reported in Whitebook et al. (2016).
- 15 National Center for Education Statistics (2012). Table 4. Percentage distribution of public school teachers, by highest degree earned and state: 2011–12. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass112_2013314_t1s_004.asp.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 CSCCE analysis of NSECE data.
- 18 Schmit, S. (2012). *Head Start Participants, Programs, Families and Staff in 2012*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). Retrieved from <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/HSPreschool-PIR-2012-Fact-Sheet.pdf>; and the percentage has continued to climb: 73 percent of center-based Head Start teachers according to most recent estimate (2015). See Office of Head Start (2015). *Head Start Program Facts Fiscal Year 2015*. Washington, DC: Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved from: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/factsheets/docs/head-start-fact-sheet-fy-2015.pdf>. Note: For this particular estimate, we have substituted available Head Start administrative data due to a wide discrepancy with the survey-based estimate from NSECE (33 percent). In other instances, for example, earnings (see note 41), there is little difference between NSECE survey-based estimates and Head Start administrative data.
- 19 CSCCE analysis of NSECE data.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Terminology that indicates a teacher has obtained the required knowledge and experience to qualify her for teaching varies within and across sectors. In K-12, states use one or more terms – “certification,” “license,” and “credential” – to indicate that a teacher is qualified. In K-12, certification is typically earned after completing a bachelor’s or higher degree. In ECE, “license” is generally the term used to indicate that a program (center or school) meets certain standards and is not commonly used to describe teacher qualifications. The terms “certification” or “credential” are more commonly used to describe ECE teachers’ documented qualifications. However, as noted, such documentation is not required for most early childhood teachers, and required education and experience to qualify for various certificates and credentials vary depending on program type, funding source, and regulatory agency.
- 22 Loeb, S., Miller, L., & Strunk, K. (2009). *The State Role in Teacher Professional Development and Education throughout Teachers’ Careers*. Retrieved from <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/edfp.2009.4.2.212>.

- 23 Barnett, W. S., Friedman-Krauss, A. H., Gomez, R. E., Horowitz, M., Weisenfeld, G. G., Brown, K. C., & Squires, J. H. (2016). *The State of Preschool 2015: State Preschool Yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research. Retrieved from <http://nieer.org/research/state-preschool-2015>. According to a CSCCE analysis of NSECE data, 31 percent of all center-based ECE teachers have a state certification, while 56 percent of teachers in school-sponsored programs have a state certification.
- 24 There is no longitudinal source of information, such as the K-12 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences, National Center of Education Statistics, which provides comparable data for the ECE workforce as a whole or by sector. No available research examines the percentage of teaching staff who completed their preparation prior to employment, but based on qualification requirements, preschool teachers in school-sponsored programs are the most likely to have done so. Higher qualifications for Head Start teachers, established in the 2007 Reauthorization of Head Start, allowed many teachers to return to school to earn degrees while employed, see Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Public Law 110-134, 42 USC 9801 *et seq.* (Dec. 12, 2007). A CSCCE analysis of the National Survey of Early Care and Education suggests that roughly one-third of the center-based workforce was enrolled in a college course relevant to ECE during the year prior to data collection.
- 25 Whitebook, M., Austin, L., Ryan, S., Kipnis, F., Almaraz, M., & Sakai, L. (2012). *By default or by design? Variations in higher education programs for early care and teachers and their implications for research methodology, policy, and practice*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from http://cscce.berkeley.edu/files/2012/ByDefaultOrByDesign_FullReport_2012.pdf.
- 26 Whitebook, M., Gomby, D., Bellm, D., Sakai, L., & Kipnis, F. (2009). *Preparing teachers of young children: The current state of knowledge, and a blueprint for the future*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://cscce.berkeley.edu/preparing-teachers-of-young-children-the-current-state-of-knowledge-and-a-blueprint-for-the-future/>.
- 27 Exstrum, M. (2012). *Teaching in charter schools*. National Council of State Legislatures. Retrieved from <http://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/teachingincharterschools.pdf>.
- 28 Barnett et al. (2016).
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Exstrum (2012).
- 31 While each state normally sets its own teacher qualifications for ECE programs, teacher qualifications are set by the federal government for Head Start and Military Child Care.
- 32 Office of Head Start (2012). *Statutory Degree and Credentialing Requirements for Head Start Teaching Staff*. Retrieved from http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/IMs/2008/resour_ime_012_0081908.html.
- 33 Office of Child Care. Data Explorer and State Profiles. "Minimum Preservice Qualifications" from analysis of 2014 state child care licensing regulations by the National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement (Unpublished). Retrieved from <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/data>
- 34 National Center for Education Statistics (2012). Table 4. Percentage of public school districts that offered various benefits to teachers, by state: 2011-12. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass112_2013311_dis_004.asp
- 35 Only two states and three territories have a salary or wage scale for various professional roles, see Office of Child Care Data Explorer and State Profiles. "PD Workforce." <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/data>. Comparable salary schedules to K-3 teachers are somewhat more common for ECE teachers in state-funded pre-K programs, particularly those in public school settings, see Barnett et al. (2016).
- 36 See National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2013). *Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings, National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)*. OPRE Report #2013-38. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/nsece_wf_brief_102913_0.pdf. Six states and one territory offer or facilitate benefits (e.g., health insurance coverage, retirement) for the workforce. Office of Child Care Data Explorer and State Profiles. "PD Workforce: Compensation, Benefits, and Workforce Conditions." Retrieved from <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/data%20>.
- 37 In 2012, 74 percent of center-based teachers were full-time workers; the median hours worked per week was 39.2, see National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2013). *Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings, National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)*.
- 38 National Center for Education Statistics (2012). Table 6. Among regular full-time public school teachers, average base salary and earnings from all sources, percentage of teachers with earnings from various salary supplements, and among those teachers, the average amount earned from the supplement during the current school year, by state: 2011-12. *Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS)*. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass112_2013314_t1s_006.asp.
- 39 All ECE salary estimates are derived from mean hourly wages as reported in National Survey of Early Care and Education Project Team (2013). *Number and Characteristics of Early Care and Education (ECE) Teachers and Caregivers: Initial Findings, National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE)*, unless otherwise noted. Annual salaries assume full-time work: 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. We report the mean rather than the median to be comparable to K-12 SASS data. Elsewhere we have reported the median, see Whitebook et al. (2016).
- 40 Exstrum (2012).
- 41 The estimated average salary for Head Start teachers using Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) data is very similar at \$29,857, see Schmit, S. (2013) *Head Start Participants, Programs, Families, and Staff in 2012*. Washington, DC. Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). Retrieved from <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/HSpreschool-PIR-2012-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.
- 42 Hirsch, B. & Macpherson, D. (2016). Union Membership and Coverage Database from the CPS (*Unionstats.com*). Table V: Occupation: Union Membership, Coverage, Density, and Employment by Occupation, 1983-2015.
- 43 All ECE union membership rates are based on CSCCE analysis of 2012 National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) data.