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## **Universal Preschool in California: An Overview of Workforce Issues**

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## ***Introduction***

As California considers ways to develop a universal preschool system for its young children, and as several California counties begin to implement such a system, many issues are emerging with regard to the workforce necessary to provide these expanded preschool services. Who will the educators of our young children be? How will we adequately recruit, train, compensate and retain them? To what extent will the system use the skills and services of the state's current early care and education workforce?

With the state's child population projected to grow at a rate of 55 percent by the year 2025, compared to a nationwide projection of only 14 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000), the questions about who will prepare California's children for success in their school years become extremely pressing. The intention of this paper is to offer a detailed analysis of these emerging workforce issues – not to provide definitive answers, but rather to guide policy makers, planners and advocates in asking the right questions as they design and develop a preschool system for California over the next several years.

This paper has been prepared as part of the Next Steps project, a broad effort, with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, to examine future prospects and directions for California's early care and education workforce. Since universal preschool is now prominently on the state's policy agenda, the Next Steps team was asked to prepare a paper specifically on preschool workforce issues, but much of the following discussion pertains to the broader early care and education system as well.

The complex and interconnected challenges of developing a preschool workforce strategy are, naturally, not unique to California. Much of the material in this paper has been developed in conversation with planners and policy makers in other states – both those who are preparing to launch new initiatives, and those who have been involved in state-funded preschool services for some time. Some states have had the painful experience of launching preschool systems without sufficient attention to workforce planning, only to encounter serious training, compensation and retention issues after the fact. Massachusetts, by contrast, is making workforce planning a central feature of the process from the start. Most notably, the legislative proposal drafted by that state’s Early Education for All campaign calls for the creation of a broad-based, inclusive Workforce Development Board that – working hand in hand with the overall preschool system planning and financing process – would craft a comprehensive plan to recruit, train, compensate and retain a skilled and stable preschool workforce.<sup>1</sup>

First, it is useful to begin with definitions, since the term “universal preschool” itself appears to mean a variety of things to different people. Does it mean a school readiness-oriented program targeted to *all* children of a certain age (as in Georgia, New York and Oklahoma), or one that offers expanded access to preschool only for a subgroup of the child population, such as those living in poverty or currently unserved by any kind of early care and education program (as in New Jersey and Texas)? Will the program serve four-year-old children only (as in Georgia), or will it begin at age three (as in many states) or even younger? Does it mean a revamping of the state’s entire early care and education system (as proposed in Massachusetts)? In what kinds of settings can preschool services take place?

Thus far, most discussions of universal preschool in California have taken a relatively broad view of what “universal preschool” can mean. Broadly defined, it can be an effort, phased in over a number of years, to ensure all children (birth to five) access to

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 3 for specific language from the Massachusetts legislative proposal on the makeup and tasks of the Workforce Development Board.

a high-quality system of early care and education – one that, ideally, is linked seamlessly to kindergarten and the early elementary grades. Its focal point would be a school readiness program for three- to four-year-old children, embedded into a system that offers families full-day, quality early care and education services as needed. These services might take place in a variety of school-based, center-based or home-based settings. Although the universal preschool effort may begin with smaller, targeted subgroups of the child population, we consider that it could well be the beginning of a longer-term, multi-year campaign to reform and revitalize the entire system of early care and education offered to children from birth to school age.

“School readiness” is itself another widely used term in need of definition. There is a broad consensus among early childhood educators and researchers that early learning and school readiness are not reducible to academic skill-building, but are based in the social-emotional and motivational features of child development, such as curiosity, playfulness, making friends, communicating feelings, paying attention, controlling one’s behavior, and resolving disagreements peacefully. And since children living in poverty, or traumatized by abuse or violence, have been found to enter school less ready to learn, these community and family indicators are also important elements of school readiness (Espinosa & McCathren, 2002; Barbarin, 2002).

As policy makers and the general public express growing interest in expanded access to “education” for young children, however, some early childhood educators express concern that this interest may be proceeding largely from an inaccurate picture of early learning and development. There is a common tendency to think of school readiness only in intellectual or cognitive terms: as the mastery of a certain array of concepts that a child needs in order to perform the academic tasks of elementary school. But early education that truly addresses how children learn in the years before school is qualitatively different from the largely academic focus of most elementary school

classrooms.<sup>2</sup> An appropriate prekindergarten program is not simply elementary school “writ small.”

Given a broader view of early learning and school readiness – which indeed begins not at age three or four, but in a child’s infancy – what does it take to be a skilled practitioner in early care and education? What kind of workforce do we need? While nearly anyone has a reasonably clear mental picture of what elementary, secondary or higher education looks like, there is much less public understanding of the nature of early learning, and of the subtle and multi-dimensional ways in which a well-trained and skilled early educator teaches young children. As a result, defining and broadly publicizing the features of high-quality early care and education is likely to be an important part of any campaign to build the public will for a universal preschool system.

This issue, of course, is not only a matter of concern for planners of universal preschool; it goes to the heart of public policy related to our broader early care and education system, and of the daily experiences of California’s young children in a wide variety of settings. In fundamental ways, unfortunately, a lack of understanding or agreement about the developmental and learning needs of young children has become embedded into our current system, through a tendency to talk about “education” in one way, and “care” in another, as though they were not fundamentally inseparable during the first years of life (Bowman, Donovan & Burns, 2001). Public policy, and programs developed in response to it, remain split between an emphasis on the importance of early education and school readiness, and a view that programs for young children are primarily a custodial, work-related family support service, which should be delivered at the lowest possible cost with little or no regulation.

Inevitably, our early care and education workforce has come to mirror this split: on the one hand, we expect a number of practitioners to be highly trained and professionalized in order to provide “education” to young children, and on the other,

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<sup>2</sup> In many cases, of course, elementary school classrooms could also benefit from a more holistic, less strictly “academic” approach to learning and development.

approximately one-half of California's child care subsidy dollars are now going to license-exempt providers who are subject to no educational or training requirements whatever (California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, 2001).

Any drive toward universal preschool is bound to bring these questions of education and care to the fore, particularly as we attempt to build an appropriately trained preschool workforce: What are the features of the high-quality preschool experience we want all young children to have? To provide such an experience, what types of skill and training do preschool educators need? In order to attract and retain a well-prepared, stable preschool workforce, what delivery mechanisms, standards and professional development activities will be necessary?

This paper will focus on these three issues – delivery mechanisms, workforce standards and professional development – in terms of how they relate to the universal preschool workforce. The discussion will review current conditions, emerging questions, research findings, gaps in available data, relevant activities in other states, and the range of decisions that California program planners and policy makers will face as they move ahead.

## ***Delivery Mechanisms***

The discussion of universal preschool for California is not occurring in a void, since several million of the state's children already spend part of the day in out-of-home care, and nearly 100,000 adults are educating and caring for them in licensed settings (National Economic Development and Law Center, 2001). As policy makers and planners in other states have found, universal preschool is not just an added-on program initiative, but an opportunity to streamline and coordinate the regulation, administration and financing of all early care and education services – a potential lever for change and quality improvement throughout the system.

Thus far, most states have chosen to weave universal preschool into their existing mixed delivery system of early care and education, for several important reasons: the need for a large number of facilities, which any single sector (including the public schools) is unlikely to be able to provide on its own; the desire to build on the strengths and quality that the system has already achieved; the desire to promote parent choice and meet working families' needs, and to serve as many children as possible; and an interest in serving children where they are, since many of those eligible for preschool will already be in an early care and education setting of some kind.

In New York's universal preschool system, which began in 1998, for example, the founding legislation stipulated that at least ten percent of programs should be based outside the public schools, but in fact, 65% of programs in upstate New York, and 70% in New York City, are now housed outside the schools.<sup>3</sup> Although Texas continues to deliver its state-funded preschool system entirely within public school districts, most states have inevitably turned to their broader early care and education systems to help deliver publicly-supported preschool services (Bellm, Burton, Whitebook, Broatch & Young, 2002).

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication with Nancy Kolben, Child Care, Inc., New York, 2003.

In order to determine what kind of preschool workforce California will need, a number of questions about the preschool delivery system will need to be resolved. The primary question is to what extent the existing early care and education workforce (or a segment of it) will participate in the newly configured system, and to what extent it will be necessary to recruit a largely new cohort of practitioners. The members of the current workforce are highly diverse in terms of educational background, ability, and commitment to the profession, but no universal preschool system is likely to take shape in California without involving many of them. This is not to say that all members of the current workforce will be appropriate for the job, or that additional personnel will not also be needed.

The primary choices that have implications for the workforce have to do with the scope and types of services that universal preschool will encompass:

- How many children, of which age group – or what percentage of eligible children in the state – will the program aim to serve? As a result of this choice, how many educators will be needed, and how soon? What will be a reasonable and realistic schedule for a gradual phase-in of the program?
- Will preschool programs be designed in relation to many young children’s needs for full-day, year-round care? A significant pitfall could be to set up a dichotomy between “teachers” working in an “enriched” or “educational” program for part of the day, and others (or, quite possibly, the same personnel!) providing “child care” or “custodial care” for the rest of the day. It will be critical when introducing preschool programs into a larger early care and education system to attend to the quality of children’s learning experiences throughout that system. Research has repeatedly shown that young children need continuity of care, and above all, continuity in their relationships with caregiving and teaching adults; indeed, this is one of the primary hallmarks of how early care and education is different from the elementary school years (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).



Questions about preschool delivery mechanisms also include a number of issues related to setting and auspice. Each of the following options have implications for how large a workforce pool the state could draw from, as well as implications for standards (discussed in the following section): i.e., what degrees or levels of training the state will expect universal preschool teachers to achieve, whether the state will set the same standards across all types of settings, and an appropriately scheduled phase-in for meeting new standards. Wherever it is housed, the delivery system will also need to be financed sufficiently, in order to attract and retain a skilled and qualified workforce.

- Will California's system be delivered through the public schools only?
- Will the system be contracted through school districts or counties, but allowing them to subcontract preschool services to other entities such as community-based child care programs (as is done in Georgia, Illinois and New York)?
- Will it be a mixed delivery system, including many different early care and education settings, both publicly and privately operated?
- Will an entirely new entity be established to coordinate preschool services?
- Will Head Start or California State Preschool sites be part of the system, and if so, how?
- Will only nonprofit centers be eligible to take part (as in many states), or will the system also be open to for-profit centers (as in Georgia)?
- Will the system be center-based only, or will family child care providers also be eligible to provide preschool services? If the latter, will only "large" family child care homes (up to 14 children) be part of the system, or will "small" homes (up to eight children) be included? While most states thus far have not included family child care in the provision of universal preschool, New York has made large licensed home-based programs eligible, and family child care is also included in the current Early Education for All legislative proposal for Massachusetts.
- How might children who are currently served by license-exempt child care be included in universal preschool?

- Will the preschool funding system be based in contracts, vouchers, or a combination of the two? The answer to this question will have significant implications for financing decent compensation.

Finally, will universal preschool in California be embedded within a more comprehensive model of family support, involving articulation with such disciplines as health and social welfare, since children's needs for education and care during their first years cannot readily be separated from the family context? If so, this implies more standards and professional preparation for the workforce. As the Head Start model has shown in many ways, a quality preschool program is also attentive to the physical and mental health needs of young children and their families, and to the language and culture of children's home environments. Therefore, the preschool workforce will need to be appropriately prepared for this multidimensional nature of teaching and caring, and should reflect the linguistic and cultural diversity of the children and families it serves. These and other issues of standards and professional development are discussed in the following two sections.

## ***Standards for Staff Qualifications and Compensation***

The early care and education workforce varies widely within various sectors of the system, particularly in terms of qualifications and educational background, due to separate standards and funding streams (see Appendix 1). The more diverse a preschool system California creates, therefore, the more complex it could be to get segments of the current workforce up to a new set of common standards for professional development.

However California's universal preschool system is delivered, there will need to be agreement about workforce roles; the qualifications of the various people holding those roles, including teachers, assistant teachers, directors and home-based providers; and appropriate compensation levels tied to those standards. While standards and compensation are often discussed as separate topics, they are really interdependent, and universal preschool offers an opportunity to confront both challenges hand in hand, so that professional development is directly tied to a coherent wage and career ladder, and an equitable compensation package is incorporated into the state's "price tag" of what a universal preschool system will truly cost. In this regard, California is in a position to learn from the experience of policy makers in other states, some of whom are now addressing the issue of compensation after the fact, having put a preschool system in place but finding themselves unable to retain the workforce they need.

With the exception of Rhode Island, all states already make a distinction in qualifications between those who teach in state-funded prekindergarten programs and those working in other early care and education programs. Some states have chosen to increase their standards for the prekindergarten workforce (often phasing them in over time) to the bachelor's degree (BA) level for teachers, and in the case of New York, even to the master's degree (MA) level. Roughly half the states now set prekindergarten teacher standards at the same level as those for kindergarten teachers (Barnett, 2003).

California, too, has made a distinction in standards between its State Preschools and other programs, but thus far, it has set the bar of preschool standards at a lower level

than many other states. The recently developed Master Plan for California Education, however, recommends equivalent standards for preschool teachers as for teachers in K-12 education (Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, 2002; California Children & Families Commission, 2002). Currently, a teacher in California's State Preschools or other state-contracted programs is required to complete 24 units of study in early childhood education (ECE) and 16 units in general education – 20 credits fewer than the 60 required for a two-year associate (AA) degree, placing the state roughly in the middle of what states require of their universal preschool workforce. California also makes a further distinction, in that teaching staff in these state-contracted programs are subject to Title V standards, which require them to complete more college units of ECE than staff of non-contracted programs, who are governed by Title 22 standards and required to complete only 12 units. The Master Plan recommendation would be a considerable advance over the state's current Child Development Permit Matrix, which is based largely on Title V standards (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2000).

**Table 1: Pre-Service Requirements for Teachers  
in State-Financed Prekindergarten Programs**

Child Development Associate (CDA)	Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Iowa (if in private ECE setting), Massachusetts (if in private ECE setting), Missouri, Oregon, Vermont (if in private ECE setting), Virginia
Associate degree (AA)	Ohio (by 2008)
AA in Early Childhood Education or equivalent	Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Washington
College credits in Early Childhood Education	California (24 units)
Bachelor's (BA) degree without specific Early Childhood Education endorsement, credential or equivalent	District of Columbia, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, West Virginia, Wisconsin
BA with specific Early Childhood Education endorsement, credential or equivalent	Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa (if in public school setting), Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts (if in public school setting), Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont (if in public school setting)

Source: Ackerman (2002). Note: Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Utah and Wyoming do not have state-financed prekindergarten programs.

Some states that are choosing to increase their standards for the preschool workforce are phasing them in over time; in New York, preschool teachers will be required to have an MA plus certification as of fall 2003, and in New Jersey, they will be required to have a P-3 (preschool to Grade 3) teaching credential as of fall 2004. But a recent study by the Center for the Child Care Workforce of state-funded prekindergarten programs in five states found that states have had mixed success at meeting their goals for increased standards. Among privately operated state-funded prekindergartens in Chicago, for example, only 66 percent of teachers had earned the required bachelor's degree at the time of the study. In Georgia, where standards were being raised to the BA level, only about one-half of teachers in privately operated programs had earned a BA at the time of the study, vs. 93 percent of teachers in public school-based programs. In New York, about 38 percent of teachers in privately operated programs and 75 percent of teachers in publicly operated programs had earned an MA (Bellm et al., 2002).

California, too, is already finding it difficult to retain early educators with associate (AA) degrees, a challenge that will be compounded if bachelor's degrees or other standards become mandatory. It is widely recognized that much of this current staffing crisis in early care and education is due to low compensation. Even practitioners in the field who hold BA degrees earn roughly half the compensation level of teachers in grades K-12.

Some states have set their preschool standards at the BA level, implicitly urging parity in compensation with BA-level teachers in K-12 education, but none have entirely created the financing mechanisms to deliver on that promise. Currently, however, planners and advocates in Illinois and Massachusetts are attempting to build a compensation component into their state's preschool financing plan. Georgia has implemented minimum salary levels for teachers in state-funded prekindergarten programs, and also offers higher reimbursement rates to programs employing better-educated teachers (Bellm et al., 2002). New Jersey has also recently mandated that preschool teachers with equivalent credentials be paid salaries equivalent to those of teachers in their school districts.

When standards are not linked to an appropriate system of financial reward, the danger is that the compensation, qualifications and retention of preschool staff will vary widely based on where programs are delivered, thus failing to address the fundamental need for a skilled, stable, high-quality workforce throughout the preschool system. The recent study of state-funded prekindergartens by the Center for the Child Care Workforce found disturbing evidence of a two-tier system emerging in several states, in which personnel at publicly operated Pre-K sites had significantly higher educational qualifications, higher compensation levels and lower turnover than those at privately-operated sites. This finding held true for California, where 30 percent of State Preschool staff in public school settings had earned a BA, but only eight percent of their counterparts in privately operated State Preschools had done so. Further, average starting salaries for State Preschool teachers were \$14.16 and \$10.84 per hour in publicly-operated and privately-operated settings respectively. Across states, this trend appeared to be due primarily to public schools' larger infrastructure and greater access to resources (Bellm et al., 2002). If California's preschool services are to be delivered partly through the private system, it will be essential to establish resources and mechanisms to avoid such a disparity, and to integrate compensation standards for universal preschool into overall compensation standards for the entire early care and education system.

If California aims to set preschool educators' compensation at a level of parity with public kindergarten or elementary school jobs, will parity mean the same starting compensation package, including benefits and graduated pay scales? Benefits are of particular concern in the early care and education workforce, where a lack of health insurance and other benefits is prevalent (Center for the Child Care Workforce, 2002). Further, how would a parity system take into account any differences in the length of the preschool program day or year? If preschool is not a full-day program, there will also need to be some mechanism to combine funding with that of other early care and education services. Issues may also arise of the same person working different jobs in the course of a given day, with many if not all of the same children, at different pay scales. Currently, the Early Education for All plan in Massachusetts calls for the use of Pre-K

dollars to pay for three hours of a teacher's day, so that current child care funding can be spread across the rest of the day to increase compensation overall.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of educational standards for California preschool staff, the choices will be to adhere to the state's existing standards for contracted programs, which not everyone currently meets; to expect higher standards; or (least likely of the options) to lower the standards. If standards are to be raised, how much time will be allotted to phase in the new standards, given the needs of current and new practitioners to meet them? Will alternative pathways to professional development be recognized, according to a "competency-based" model, or will the model be based only on attainment of formal education? Will the new standards require the completion of a certain degree only, or will teachers also need to obtain a specialized certification or credential, as currently required in at least 13 states? (See Table 1.) Further, if a credential will be required, will it be the same as for teaching kindergarten or grades K-3, or should it be a specialized preschool credential?

The answer to this latter question will be related to the consensus that Californians develop on the relationship between preschool education and elementary education; i.e., the ways in which they are part of a continuous whole, and the ways in which they are distinct from each other. How will we define "preschool education," and how will we define the content of the training needed in order to provide it? Standards will need to address the various dimensions of school readiness, literacy and early learning; the physical and mental health needs of young children; and issues of language and culture. Part of this process will be to come to a consensus about core competencies for staff at different job levels, in order to establish a coherent career ladder system for early care and education staff.

Standards will also have a major impact on California's training and higher education system for early childhood education, which, much like the state's early care and education system, is itself diverse and uncoordinated. Once the state has set its

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<sup>4</sup> Personal communication with Anne Mitchell, early care and education consultant, January 2003.

qualifications for universal preschool staff, what will the existing early care and education workforce need in order to meet these standards? What are the barriers? And is California's higher education system ready for the job? These questions are addressed in the following section.



### ***Professional Development Needs and Higher Education System Capacity***

California faces significant challenges in meeting the professional development needs of a universal preschool workforce, and in assuring that its higher education system will be ready to fulfill this new area of demand. Since California has set its current standards for the early care and education workforce below the associate degree (AA) level, the responsibility for training and preparing this workforce has largely gone to the community colleges. Four-year institutions, by contrast, do not generally see early childhood education as part of their purview – leading to the twin problems that most education departments in four-year colleges and universities are poorly integrated into the overall professional development system for early care and education, and are poorly articulated with two-year programs of study.

Other states are currently exploring solutions to similar dilemmas. Several have found it critical to establish a body (even if temporary) that is charged with coordinating and tracking efforts at professional development solutions. Illinois, for example, has created a higher education articulation initiative, convening a panel with representatives from all levels of education to develop a coherent articulation system. As noted earlier, Massachusetts is proposing the establishment of a Workforce Development Board as a central feature of its Early Education for All planning process. A California panel, higher education consortium, or workforce development board of some kind – building on the groundbreaking work done by the Advancing Careers Project at Pacific Oaks College – could be charged with examining issues of higher education content, capacity, articulation, coordination among colleges, and other issues, developing a set of competencies that clearly describes what practitioners need in order to be considered ready to work in California's preschool system.

In terms of assessing the California higher education system's current capacity to meet the demand for professional preparation of a universal preschool workforce, a recent report (Brown, Burr, Krieger, Johnson & Mihaly, 2001) contains valuable

information about programs currently offered, but many unanswered questions remain. Most critically, our data are incomplete about the number of students involved in these programs, how many earn degrees, and whether they actually stay in the field after receiving training. The following is a summary of degree programs and other training currently available (Whitebook, Cruz, Munn & Bellm, forthcoming).

*Associate degree (AA) level.* Of the state's 107 community colleges, 91 offer classes in early childhood education (ECE), child development (CD) or related subjects; 56 offer an AA degree in ECE or CD, 38 offer an AS degree, and some offer both. Many also offer certificates such as general child development, associate teacher, teacher, infant toddler care and development, school age, family child care, master teacher, site supervisor, program administrator, early intervention, diversity, and bilingual/bicultural education. In 2001-2002, 6,360 awards were given in California community colleges; roughly one-quarter of these were AA degrees, and the rest were certificates. That same year, 142,824 students were enrolled in child development courses in community colleges; four-fifths of these were taking two or more courses.

*Bachelor's degree (BA) level.* Of the 23 campuses in the California State University system, 13 offer a BA degree in ECE or CD, and two offer a BA in related subjects with an ECE or CD emphasis. At the 10 University of California campuses, the options are more limited, with three campuses offering a BA in Human Development, and two UC Extension programs offering ECE certificates in ECE. Ten private colleges or universities in the state also offer a BA in ECE or CD, and four offer a BA in a related subject with an ECE focus. According to informal estimates made by instructors in these programs, however, the majority of students who earn BA degrees do not go on to work in early care and education; many pursue elementary education careers instead.

*Master's degree (MA) level.* Six of the 23 California State University campuses offer an MA degree in ECE or CD, and four offer an MA in related subjects with an ECE or CD emphasis. One University of California campus offer an MA in Human Development, and two others offer an MA in Education with some opportunity for ECE-

related work. Three private colleges or universities offer an MA in ECE or CD, four offer an MA in related subjects with an ECE or CD emphasis, and two offer an MA in Child Life.

*Ph.D. level.* One University of California campus offers a Ph.D. in Human Development, and two campuses (and one private university) offer a Ph.D. in Education.

*Other training.* In addition to these programs, many forms of community-based training are available, but they usually do not bear college credit. These programs vary widely in scope and function, but all play an important role in delivering training to the early care and education workforce. No data are currently compiled about the capacity of this community-based training system. Training institutions include resource and referral agencies, CAEYC, the California Child Care Initiative Project, the California Family Child Care Association, the California School Age Consortium, the Center for Health Training, the Family Child Care Training Project, the TANF Careers Project, the Child Development Training Consortium, the Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers at West Ed, and Program Quality Consortia.

What are the major challenges in building a universal preschool workforce through existing training institutions and delivery mechanisms? Foremost, as can be judged from the previous discussion, early care and education in California lacks a coherent professional development system. There is no centralized registry, no ongoing collection of administrative data, and no universal certification system that would lead to accurate assessments of the size of the workforce, its educational qualifications, and its ongoing progress toward meaningful credentials and degrees. Although there are many different professional development opportunities in the field, we lack a clear sense of how well these meet the needs of the current workforce, although we do have a sense of some of the problems. The primary shortcomings of the system revolve around issues of articulation, content and institutional capacity.

*Articulation.* There is a lack of coordination among various training institutions and organizations regarding course content and offerings, making the transition across systems difficult (for example, from two-year to four-year, public to private, or informal to formal training institutions), and leading to frustration and inefficient career movement. Further, we currently have little idea of whether BA students are building on a previous AA program experience, or are working on a completely separate track.

*Content.* There is no coherent, consistently agreed-upon curriculum about what constitutes appropriate core competencies for working with young children of various ages in a variety of settings. There is also very little information about the varying ways in which different institutions are now preparing their students, but we do know that a number of content areas identified as important to the field – including program management, program assessment, emerging literacy, child observation, linguistic diversity and special education – are not integrated consistently into early care and education curricula.

*Capacity.* The lack of infrastructure is tied to limited resources for the higher education system, reflected in the number and types of classes available, and in the characteristics of the faculty (many of whom are adjunct). We do not yet have a clear sense of the funding levels that higher education institutions would need in order to comprehensively meet the demand for a better-trained workforce to deliver universal preschool and other early care and education services. We do know, however, that current levels of funding are constraining community colleges' ability to respond to requests for more early childhood education classes.

Further detail on issues of articulation, content and capacity can be found in the Appendices.

To the extent that members of California's *current* early care and education workforce will take part in staffing a statewide preschool system, planners will also need to consider what types of assistance will be needed to facilitate their professional

development. Since the introduction of universal preschool, perhaps accompanied by an overall revamping of early care and education, could well displace a segment of the current workforce, a significant concern will be to give members of that workforce a fair chance at taking part in the new system and *not* being displaced.

Currently, many in the early care and education workforce could be classified as “non-traditional” students: low-income working adults over the age of 25, often employed full-time, and often parents themselves. Many are not native English speakers, and many have limited literacy skills in English or other languages (Whitebook et al., 2003b; Phillips, Crowell & Whitebook, in press). These characteristics create a distinct set of challenges for higher education and other training institutions, including needs for:

- Classes at non-traditional hours
- Classes conducted in languages other than English
- Classes in English as a Second Language (ESL)
- Assistance with costs related to transportation, child care and books
- Financial assistance to pursue a higher education degree program
- Substitute coverage
- Access to supervised practicum experience
- Counseling or mentoring in order to pursue less piecemeal, more focused programs of study, including degree programs.

While some of these supports are in place to a limited degree, most will need to be expanded, improved or added in order to train and prepare a sufficient universal preschool workforce:

- Some career counseling is available at colleges through professional growth advisors and mentors, or through a few resource and referral agencies, but needs coordination and expansion. Currently, college counseling often reinforces the piecemeal approach, and doesn’t help with long-term career planning, financial aid or articulation issues, or with screening out students

who are unsuitable to the field. One model now aiming to address these needs is Alameda County's Professional Development Coordinator system, supported through county First Five funds.

- A limited amount of scholarships and other financial assistance is available through Pell Grants and other means, but early care and education students are often uninformed about, or excluded from, other financial aid programs (Brown, Burr, Johnson, Krieger & Mihaly, 2001). The California CARES stipend programs have provided a significant incentive for professional development, but its continued existence is uncertain, and it is not yet known whether, or how quickly, teachers and providers participating in CARES programs are moving toward a coherent degree.
- Commonly used solutions such as distance learning or non-college-based training might not help participants sufficiently advance up a career ladder to be qualified to work in universal preschool.
- Practicum opportunities, although they have been expanded through the California Early Childhood Mentor program, are still insufficient.
- Specific initiatives are needed to help those who already have a BA degree, or who are currently pursuing a BA, to complete sufficient coursework in early childhood education or child development, in order to be certified to teach in a preschool program.

## ***Recommendations***

Our overarching recommendation is that California use the development of universal preschool as an opportunity to reform and revitalize its entire early care and education system, particularly in the area of workforce development. In light of that central goal, we offer the following additional proposals for action.

### **Workforce Development**

- We recommend that California create a mechanism such as a Workforce Development Board, whose members would work closely with other preschool planners to ensure that all who are involved in the planning process are keeping workforce implications and issues clearly in mind. In the absence of such a mechanism, the complexity and multitude of workforce issues are unlikely to be addressed systematically through existing bodies, or are likely to be addressed on a piecemeal basis.
- Membership of the Board, ideally, would reflect a balance of influence and expertise, and would include a wide variety of experts and stakeholders, including representatives of relevant state agencies, center-based and home-based early care and education programs (including teachers and providers), Head Start, public schools, resource and referral agencies, higher education and professional development institutions, and business, labor and philanthropic organizations.
- The Board should also address the need for better coordination and continuity between preschool education and grades K-12, and its work should be well connected with comparable K-12 workforce planning efforts.

### **Standards for Staff Qualifications and Compensation**

- We recommend that the setting of workforce standards for universal preschool be specifically linked with the financing of the system and the development of appropriate compensation levels tied to those standards.
- The state Workforce Development Board or other body should be charged with developing appropriate core competencies and standards for the universal

preschool workforce, including a cross-disciplinary approach encompassing school readiness, physical and mental health, and family support. Much of the necessary groundwork can be found in the Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines developed by the Child Development Division, California Department of Education (California Dept. of Education, 2000).

- Early childhood educators should be part of the Governor's Commission on Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for grades K-12; with the passage of AB 2217 in 2002, this commission was charged with examining ADA and rates related to compensation for all levels of education, including preschool.

#### Professional Development Needs and Higher Education System Capacity

- As a key to the success of universal preschool in California, we recommend that the state's higher education system be a strong partner in the development of standards, curricula and articulation agreements for the professional preparation of the preschool workforce.
- Strategies must be developed to enable the state's higher education system to respond effectively to increased needs for educating and training the early care and education workforce, including increased capacity, coordination of efforts among institutions, and improvements in the content and quality of training offered. (Further recommendations on issues of articulation, content and capacity can be found in Appendix 2.)
- Higher education efforts for the early care and education field are seriously hampered by the lack of certain types of information. Major research needs include the following:
  - Information on which professional development strategies (e.g. training or mentoring) lead to discernible improvements in practice; the extent to which participants in various forms of training are staying in the field; and for those who do stay, what their career pathways and opportunities are.
  - An assessment of the capacity of California's higher education system to assist in preparing an expanded preschool workforce, including pedagogy and course content, and what kinds of investment and coordination the



system would need in order to meet a growing demand. Although community colleges keep track of how many students receive degrees and certificates, the four-year colleges do not routinely collect this information. An inventory of existing data and their limitations is now being compiled by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (Whitebook et al., forthcoming).

## ***Conclusion***

The increasing discussion of universal preschool for California provides an unprecedented opportunity to think about all services for young children more systematically – particularly with regard to the challenges facing the early care and education workforce, and the current limits in capacity of the state’s higher education system. Since research has long shown that the quality of children’s experiences in early care and education rests primarily upon the consistency and skill of their teachers, it is clear that California can only assure a high-quality preschool system by building a skilled and stable preschool workforce. We cannot afford to let workforce development become an afterthought: it must be central to the preschool planning process.

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## ***Appendices***

### **1. A Profile of California's Current Early Care and Education Workforce**

Before planners can determine California's readiness to provide universal preschool services, it is helpful to review data on the state's current early care and education workforce, and to assess gaps and limitations in the available research.

This workforce is typically divided into three main groups: center-based teaching and administrative staff, licensed family child care providers, and license-exempt home-based providers. But even within these groups there is enormous diversity in terms of setting, job position, educational background and other qualifications, experience and tenure, age, ethnicity, language, literacy skills, and degrees of professional motivation in pursuing this kind of work. Data are currently available on some but not all of these issues, and for some but not all segments of the workforce.

Most recently, as part of a pilot California Child Care Workforce Study, data on center-based staff and licensed family child care providers were compiled in 2002 for eight of California's 56 counties: Alameda, Kern, Monterey, San Benito (family child care only), San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz. The study was a joint project of the California Child Care Resource and Referral Network, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment at the University of California at Berkeley, and the Center for the Child Care Workforce. Many of the data in the following discussion are derived from that study (Whitebook, Sakai, Voisin, Waters Boots, Burton & Young, 2002a & b).

*Size of workforce.* There are approximately 32,200 licensed family child care providers in California. Center-based staff are not individually licensed or certified, however; we know only that there are approximately 9,400 licensed child care centers in the state, but not how many teaching and administrative personnel there are in those centers. And although license-exempt home-based care providers now provide about 50% of California's subsidized child care services, our only statewide data are on the number of parents using such care; no data are available on the number of license-exempt providers who receive public dollars.

*Educational background and qualifications.* Much of the variation within the workforce in this regard is driven by differing sets of regulations; in the case of license-exempt care, no qualifications are required. Workforce studies have been conducted recently in selected counties, including Alameda, Los Angeles and San Mateo, and there are data for seven counties through the pilot California Child Care Workforce Study. Apart from these county data, which show considerable variation, we do not know the extent to which the overall workforce statewide meets or exceeds the state's current qualifications for early care and education staff.

Among center-based teachers, available data show a range from 8% with a BA in Kern County to 43% in San Francisco County, and from 15% with an AA in Santa Clara

County to 28% in Kern County. A substantial number of center-based teaching staff currently have completed fewer than 24 units of early childhood education/child development coursework, ranging from 19% of teachers in San Francisco County to 44% in Kern County, and from 56% of assistant teachers in Santa Cruz County to 71% in Alameda County.

Among licensed family child care providers, an overall average of 56% across all eight counties in the Workforce Study have completed some college-level work and/or an AA degree, but this varies from a low of 51% in San Mateo County to 68% in Kern County. An overall average of 12% in the eight counties have completed a BA/BS degree or higher, with a dramatic range from 3.3% in Monterey County to 23% in San Mateo County. Among those providers who have completed some college-level work, 76% across the eight counties have taken courses in early childhood education or child development; those who have *not* taken any such courses range from a low of 38% of providers in San Francisco County to a high of 54% in Monterey County.

*Experience and tenure.* Among center-based staff, the Workforce Study yielded data on annual teacher turnover, but not on teachers' average length of tenure; current annual turnover is at 29% across the seven counties, with San Francisco County at 15% experiencing the least change in personnel. Annual assistant teacher turnover currently ranges from 19% in Kern County to 35% in San Mateo County. Among family child care, overall average tenure across eight counties was 8.5 years, ranging from 6 years in Kern County to 11 years in San Mateo County. The number of providers who had been in business for less than one year ranged from 5% in San Mateo County to 12% in Santa Clara County. While little is known overall about the stability of the license-exempt home-based workforce, information from the forthcoming longitudinal study, *Who Leaves? Who Stays? A Study of the Child Care Workforce in Alameda County, California*, indicates a very high degree of instability. Roughly one-half of relative providers (i.e., relatives of the child or children in care) and three-quarters of non-relatives receiving public subsidies in December 2000 were no longer listed as providing care one year later (Whitebook, Phillips, Jo, Crowell, Brooks & Gerber (in press)).

*Motivation, career pathways and conceptions of work.* Data on this subject are not comprehensive, but a variety of child care studies have shown wide variation in the workforce. Some teachers and providers have explicitly set out to pursue early care and education as a career, while others view it a shorter-term job, a temporary pursuit while their own children are young (particularly among family child care providers), or even as a family obligation (particularly in the case of children cared for by relatives in license-exempt settings). Center-based teachers' and home-based providers' interest in and pursuit of training and professional development will, of course, vary widely in relation to differing intentionality about this work (Kontos, Howes, Shinn & Galinsky, 1995).

*Age and ethnicity.* While the pilot round of the California Child Care Workforce Study did not gather demographic data on center-based staff, independent studies of Alameda and San Francisco Counties by the Center for the Child Care Workforce provide the following picture. In both counties, roughly two-thirds of teachers and

assistant teachers are in their 30s or older. In Alameda County, 25% of teachers and 23% of assistant teachers were African American, 14% of teachers and 28% of assistants were Latino, 43% of teachers and 35% of assistants were European American, 13 % of teachers and 10% of assistants were Asian American, and 5% of teachers and 4% of assistants were of other ethnicities. In San Francisco County, 13% of teachers and 18% of assistant teachers were African American, 12% of teachers and 20% of assistants were Latino, 37% of teachers and 23% of assistants were European American, 31 % of teachers and 37% of assistants were Asian American, and 7% of teachers and 2% of assistants were of other ethnicities (Burton, Lavery & Duff, 2002; Burton, 2003).

The average age for family child care providers found in the California Workforce Study was the early 40s, ranging from an average of 40 in Kern County to 46 in San Francisco County. The ethnicity of providers ranged from 25% European American in San Francisco County to 47% in San Mateo County and 51 % in Kern County; 12% Latino in Alameda County to 56 % in Monterey County; fewer than 1% African American in Santa Cruz County to 29% in Alameda County and 31 % in San Francisco County; and fewer than 1% Asian American in Kern and Santa Cruz Counties to 12% in San Francisco, San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.

*Literacy levels.* The forthcoming *Who Leaves? Who Stays?* study has compiled data on English literacy levels for its sample of family child care providers and center-based teaching staff in Alameda County. The results have troubling implications in terms of professional development standards for the preschool workforce, who will be expected to provide literacy-rich environments for young children. While teachers' and providers' average score compared favorably with the national average on a test to determine their ability in literacy tasks typically encountered at home, at work and in day-to-day activities,<sup>5</sup> no one in the sample scored within the highest literacy level (level 5) on the test, and nearly one-third of the sample (32%) scored within the "limited proficiency" range (levels 1 and 2), representing deficient literacy skills for any adult (Phillips, Crowell & Whitebook, in press).

*Gaps in available data.* While a good amount of baseline data on the characteristics of the child care workforce is available in the eight counties of the California Child Care Workforce Study, the overall lack of baseline data for most of the state could seriously hamper its effectiveness in planning for the development of a universal preschool workforce. Some of the missing pieces of information are administrative data that could potentially be compiled from available sources – or from new mechanisms such as biennial surveys or a statewide registry of individual child care teachers or providers – but other gaps in data are the result of multiple funding and regulatory streams for early care and education in California, with no centralized coordinating body charged with compiling workforce information. The following are some of the most important areas for research about the workforce:

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<sup>5</sup> The measure used in the study was the Document Literacy Scale from the Test of Applied Literacy Skills (TALS), developed by the Educational Testing Service (Kirsch, Jungeblut & Campbell, undated).

1. Statewide data about the current composition of the early care and education workforce, including demographic characteristics, educational preparation, training levels, tenure, salaries, benefits and workplace conditions.
2. An inventory of the current resources and systems available for the professional development of California's early care and education workforce, including community colleges, four-year colleges and universities, and other training and education programs including school district, resource and referral, and community-based nonprofit efforts.
3. Data on license-exempt care providers. While the *Who Leaves? Who Stays?* study is gathering significant data on license-exempt care in Alameda County, including signs of very high turnover, very little other descriptive information is available about this growing sector of the workforce. Specifically, we don't know the socioeconomic status or ethnicity of the providers or the families they serve.



## **2. Issues of Articulation, Content and Capacity in California's Higher Education System for Training in Early Care and Education**

### Articulation:

- Limited discussion of articulation issues among institutions of higher education (e.g., community colleges, state universities and U.C.) or across sectors, and lack of incentive for institutions to address the issue, resulting in a lack of clearly delineated and smooth transitions along professional development pathways. (There are several layers of transition, about which little is currently known about transfer rates: high school to college, two-year to four-year, non-credit/informal to formal.)
- Curriculum alignment is needed across institutions at the same level and at different levels. Courses are often not counted even if similar in content, and courses at the AA level are often not accepted or required at the BA level. There can be a cap on the number of courses accepted at transfer, and there are inconsistent assessment and placement standards across institutions.
- A focused strategy is needed to achieve articulation agreements among higher education institutions throughout the state. Tiered articulation models could be developed, as in other states and occupations, that specify core knowledge and skill at each level of professional preparation.
- Many courses and degree programs in California are focused on child development, human development or a specialization within education; there is a need to see how these mesh with the credential system or across institutions of higher education.
- Work needed on accepting foreign transcripts so that students do not have to repeat course and degree requirements.
- Given that universal preschool could draw new workers, and that, depending on the standards set, many could be those with AA or BA degrees who have worked in other education or non-education fields, there is a need for alternative certification programs such as are available for K-12 teachers.
- No formal mechanism to accredit informal training options or experiential learning, or to ensure that informally delivered credit-bearing courses will lead to certification or will be acknowledged by institutions of higher education. The result is frustration and discouragement among those who participate.

### Content:

- There is a need for retooling of existing curricula, as well as training for existing faculty, since many were trained prior to major recent developments in the field: the increase in programs and services for infants and toddlers, for children with special needs, and for children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds; the increasingly multidisciplinary nature of early care and education services, including attention to health, mental health and social welfare; and burgeoning new research on brain development, school readiness and other pertinent issues.

While these issues should be infused in all classes, there are also needs for specialization.

- Some coursework provides a background in human or child development, but does not train students specifically for working with young children.
- Much programming does not take into account the needs of adult learners.
- Insufficient number of courses in languages other than English; improvements needed in ESL programs.
- Post-BA programs are needed for helping students work in new early care and education settings and roles, including policy, teaching, resource and referral, research and administration. where are we preparing folks to work on policy, to teach, R&R, to do research, to administer programs?
- Need for development of intensive courses and fellowship systems to assist working students.

#### Capacity:

- State fiscal crisis means that community colleges cannot expand to meet growing needs because of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) caps.
- Other fields (including special education, health, social welfare and K-12 education) have benefited from large federal investments to help them build appropriate opportunities at the higher education level (McCollum & Winton, 2002). Such an investment will be important as demands on the higher education system grow with the expansion of preschool services and the movement toward professionalization of the field. Illinois and North Carolina have taken important steps in this regard by creating grants programs for early care and education faculty.
- Surveys of two- to four-year higher education programs for early care and education training, conducted by the National Center for Early Development and Learning (Early & Winton, 2001), reveal how these programs, like the early care and education system itself, are disadvantaged when compared to other higher education departments; e.g., more adjunct faculty than full-time (only 60% of the full-time faculty found overall in other fields). The report estimates that approximately half again as many full-time faculty are needed to provide appropriate counseling, workforce planning and curriculum development, even if adjunct faculty are well qualified.
- Faculty in colleges and universities do not represent student bodies with respect to ethnicity, particularly in the early care and education field, where students are much more likely than faculty to represent the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the families using early care and education. Dedicated programs are needed to recruit and support practitioners who represent diverse ethnic and linguistic groups in becoming faculty members or assuming other positions in the field; this effort will require improvements in articulation and financial aid.

### **3. Description of Workforce Development Board, from Massachusetts “Early Education for All” Legislative Proposal**

#### **SECTION 6.**

(a) The Workforce Development Board, established in Section 4 of this Act, shall be initially charged with the creation of a workforce development system designed to support the education, training and compensation of early education and care workforce, including all center and family-based infant, toddler, preschool and school-age providers. The workforce board shall also provide on-going oversight on the implementation of the workforce development system.

(b) The membership of the board shall include representatives from organizations and agencies that represent a broad spectrum of expertise, knowledge and understanding of workforce development broadly and of the professional development needs of the early childhood and school-age workforce including but not limited to representatives selected by: Office of Child Care Services, Department of Education, Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Department of Public Health, Head Start Collaboration Office within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, U.S. Administration for Children and Families, Massachusetts Head Start Association, Massachusetts Resource and Referral Network, Massachusetts Independent Child Care Organization, Massachusetts Association of Day Care Agencies, Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children, Community Partnership for Children Action Network, YMCA's of Massachusetts, Massachusetts School Age Coalition, Boys and Girls Club, Parents United for Child Care, Massachusetts Federation of Teachers, Massachusetts Teachers Association, United Auto Workers, Institute for Career and Leadership Initiatives at Wheelock College, Child Care Careers Institute, Board of Higher Education, University of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Community Colleges Executive Office, The Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, and MassINC. Membership shall also include: an independent family child care provider and a representative of a family child care system and a teacher of early education as nominated by board members.

(c) The Workforce Development Board shall, within 12 months of the adoption of this Act, develop a plan for implementation and oversight of a statewide workforce development system and shall present a draft for public discussion. The workforce development system shall include the following:

- (1) An inventory of the current resources and systems available for workforce and professional development in the commonwealth, including but not limited to Head Start trainings, community based trainings, higher education programs, resource and referral agency trainings, state and federally funded workforce development trainings/programs, public school system trainings/credentialing, and other trainings that address the needs of those who work with children and recommendations for coordinating the use of those existing resources and systems;
- (2) A review of the type, scope and range of those who work with children and youth who may potentially benefit from participating in the workforce development system;
- (3) Analyses and data about the current status of the early education and care workforce, including education preparation, training opportunities, salaries, benefits and workplace standards;

- (4) Guidelines for a career ladder(s) representing salaries and benefits that suitably compensate professionals for increases in educational attainment and with incentives for advancement, including a salary enhancement program;
  - (5) A mandatory and regularly updated professional development and qualification registry;
  - (6) Incentives and supports for early education and care professionals to seek additional training and education, such as scholarships, loan forgiveness connected to a term of service in the field, career counseling and mentoring, release time and substitutes;
  - (7) An assessment of strategies to provide credit for prior learning experiences and/or the development of equivalencies to 2 and 4 year degrees;
  - (8) Development of core competencies, a common and shared body of knowledge, for all those working in the early education and care fields;
  - (9) Agreements among higher education institutions for an articulated system of education, training, and professional development in early education and care;
  - (10) Streamlined and coordinated state certification, credentialing and training within the early education and care fields including Office of Child Care Services teacher certification, the Child Development Associate (CDA) training, current public school teacher certification, and EEA Program Standard director and teacher/provider credentialing requirements as they are phased-in over time;
  - (11) Approval of early education and care training programs and academic coursework, incentives for AA and BA programs to meet best practices and to modify curriculums to reflect current child development research, and certification of trainers and teachers of said programs and coursework established pursuant to this act;
  - (12) Efforts to ensure a range of training and educational opportunities that provide appropriate coursework for family child care as well as center-based providers;
  - (13) Strategies to recruit and retain individuals into the early education and care workforce who reflect the ethnic, racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity of Massachusetts families based on the most recently released census data;
  - (14) Training programs that are provided in languages other than English, and incorporation of such programs into any broader, articulated system that is developed;
  - (15) New public and private resources to support the workforce development system and coordination of existing workforce resources among public agencies; and
  - (16) A data collection and evaluation system for the purposes of ensuring that the workforce and professional development activities established pursuant to this act are meeting established standards of quality and are having the desired effect on recruitment, retention and quality of the workforce (e.g., a longitudinal study to demonstrate the changes in rates of recruitment and retention of early education and care teachers/providers.)
- (d) The Governor, Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives, in conjunction with the Early Education and Care Planning Council, shall host an annual ceremony to recognize and honor advancements in educational attainment among early education and care professionals.

[For the full legislative proposal, see [www.earlyeducationforall.org](http://www.earlyeducationforall.org).]