

California Early Care and Education Workforce Study:

Licensed Child Care Centers
and Family Child Care
Providers

Marin County
Highlights, August 2006



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Recognizing the critical role that early childhood educators play in the lives of children and families, First 5 California commissioned in 2004 a statewide and regional study of California's early care and education (ECE) workforce in licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes. The overall goal of the study was to collect information on the current characteristics of this workforce—particularly its educational background, and its potential needs for further professional development. This study provides a baseline for measuring future progress toward attaining a well-educated and diverse ECE workforce; it does not, however, assess teachers' and providers' overall knowledge and skills, or the content of training and coursework they have completed.

First 5 California sought statewide information about licensed family child care providers and about teachers, assistant teachers and directors employed in licensed child care centers, as well as regional comparisons with respect to demographics and child care supply. The statewide study sample included providers and center staff from every county in

the state, but there were not sufficient numbers of providers in the sample to generate county-specific reports. Counties were invited, however, to contract for additional local interviews in order to build a representative sample, and First 5 Marin agreed to commission a local study of its early care and education workforce, building on the statewide study.¹

The survey population included the 195 active licensed homes and 120 active licensed centers in Marin County, serving children from birth to five years, that were listed as of January 2004 with state-funded child care resource and referral agencies. These lists were updated in 2005 before interviews began. The Field Research Corporation, Inc., collected data from 94 licensed family child care homes and 63 centers, using a computer-assisted telephone interview (CATI) system. Family child care interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, and center interviews were conducted with the director in English. For more information about methodology, see the full study reports at the First 5 California website, <http://www/ccfc.ca.gov>.

¹ Eight other counties (Alameda, Los Angeles, Merced, Mono, Sacramento, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Santa Clara) contracted for county-specific studies of their licensed child care homes and centers. These study reports are available at the First 5 California website, <http://www/ccfc.ca.gov>.

Who are the providers, teachers, assistant teachers and directors in Marin County’s licensed child care homes and centers?

Marin County’s ECE workforce includes approximately 1,385 people, predominantly female, who educate and care for about 8,464 infants (birth to age 2) and/or preschoolers (ages 2-5, pre-kindergarten). This workforce includes about 195 providers and 94 paid assistants in licensed family child care homes, and 730 teachers, 268 assistant teachers and 99 directors in licensed child care centers.

Age and Tenure

The typical licensed family child care provider is in her late forties, and has been taking care of children in her home for nearly 12 years; 3% are age 29 or younger, and 23% are age 50 or older. Average tenure is 16 years for providers licensed to care for 14 children, and 10 years for those licensed for 8 children.

Center teachers and assistants are younger, on average, than providers, and have typically been on the job for less than five years. In contrast, 77 percent of directors have been on the job for more than five years.

Teacher Wages and Staff Turnover

Among ECE center staff, wages are low and job turnover is high:

- Average annual salary for centers’ highest-paid teachers with a BA or higher degree is \$41,496, about \$17,000 less than that of the average Marin County elementary school teachers, who typically works a shorter year and earns better benefits.
- Average hourly wage for centers’ highest-paid assistant teachers is \$12.88 per hour.
- Annual ECE teacher turnover (22%) is twice that of California public school K-12 teachers (11%) (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). ECE assistant teacher turnover is at 18%, and director turnover is less than one percent per year.

The study did not collect data about family child care provider earnings.

Ethnicity

Marin County’s ECE workforce is predominantly White, Non-Hispanic, but its ethnic diversity more closely reflects the ethnic distribution of the county’s young children than K-12 public school teachers. Family child care providers and assistant teachers are more likely to be women of color than teachers, who, in turn, are more ethnically diverse than directors. Centers holding a contract with the California Department of Education (CDE) or Head Start typically employ the most ethnically diverse staff.

Language

Family child care providers were asked whether they could speak fluently with children and families in a language other than English; directors were asked

Table 1. *Age and Tenure of Center-Based Teachers and Assistant Teachers*

	Teachers	Assistant Teachers
29 or younger	24%	46%
50 or older	24%	6%
Employed at center 5 years or more	46%	26%

Table 2. *Ethnicity of Marin County ECE Workforce, K-12 Teachers and Children Birth to Five*

	Family Child Care Providers	Center Teachers	Assistant Teachers	Directors	K-12 Teachers	Children 0-5 Years
White, Non-Hispanic	66%	77%	57%	92%	92%	70%
Latina	23%	10%	30%	0%	4%	20%
African American	2%	2%	5%	2%	1%	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	6%	7%	7%	4%	2%	4%
Other	3%	4%	1%	2%	1%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

whether they or any of their teachers or assistant teachers could do so. Our description of language ability is based on these reports. Further, directors' reports did not permit us to assess whether staff who spoke a language other than English also spoke English fluently.

Licensed family child care providers, and assistant teachers in centers, are more linguistically diverse than the Marin County adult population, 82% of whom speak English only (U.S. Census Bureau,

2000). Providers (46%) and assistant teachers (41%) are the most likely, and teachers (23%) and directors (21%) are less likely, to be able to communicate fluently with children and families in a language other than English. Fifty-five percent of centers employ at least one teacher, 78% employ at least one assistant, and 27% employ at least one director, with such language ability. After English, Spanish is the language most commonly spoken.

What are the characteristics of children served by Marin County's licensed family child care providers and child care centers licensed to serve infants and/or preschoolers?

Licensed family child care programs in Marin County serve approximately 1,464 children, and licensed centers serve approximately 7,000 children birth to age 5.

Family Child Care

- 90% of children are not yet in kindergarten.
- 63% of children are age 2 or younger.
- 33% of providers care for at least one child receiving public child care subsidy.

- 20% of providers care for at least one child with special needs.

Centers

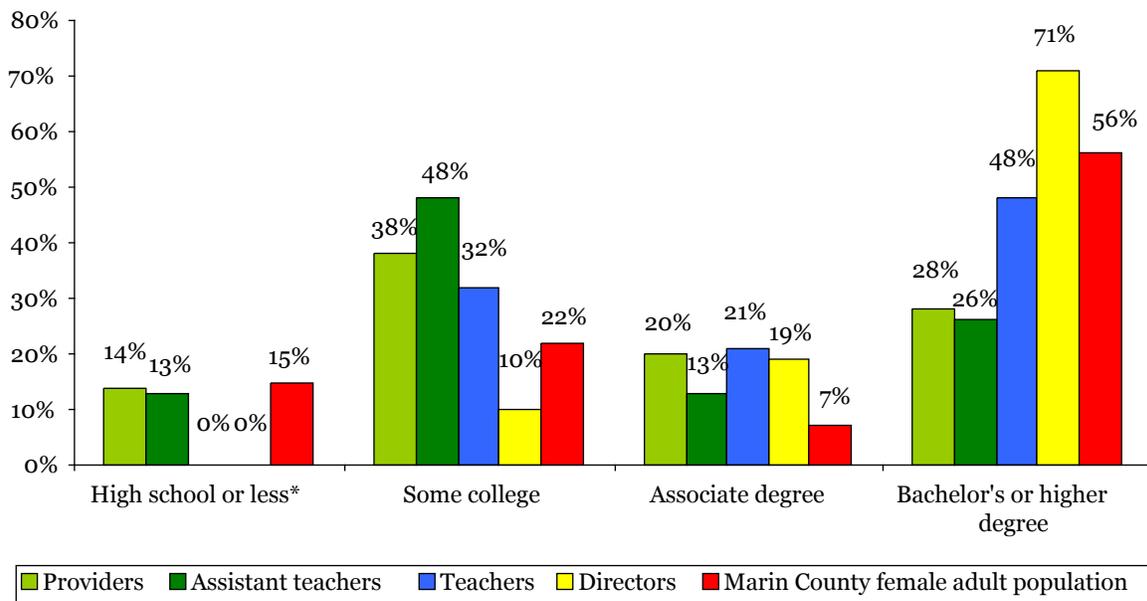
- 64% of children in centers licensed to serve infants and/or preschoolers are between the ages of 3 and 5.
- 43% of centers care for at least one child receiving public subsidy, either through a contract with CDE or Head Start (16%) or a voucher (27%).
- 49% of centers care for at least one child with special needs.

What is the level of educational attainment and early childhood development-related training for Marin County’s ECE workforce?

Educational requirements vary for the California ECE workforce, depending on whether they work in licensed homes or centers, and whether centers hold a contract with CDE or Head Start. Licensed family child providers are required only to complete 15 hours of non-credit training on preventive health practices, whereas teachers and directors in licensed centers, but not assistants, must complete 12 college credits of early childhood education. In centers holding contracts with CDE, teachers and directors are required to complete 24 credits of early childhood education and 16 credits of general education at the college level, and directors must also complete at least 8 credits related to administration.

Reflecting these requirements, center staff have attained higher levels of education than family child care providers, but on average, both family child care providers and center staff exceed state requirements. Compared to Marin County’s overall adult female population, center teachers are slightly less likely and center directors more likely to have completed a bachelor’s or higher degree, and licensed family child care providers and assistant teachers are more likely to have attended college and/or completed an associate degree. Eighty-seven percent of centers employ at least one teacher with a BA or higher degree.

Figure 1. *Estimated Educational Attainment of the ECE Workforce Compared to Marin County’s Female Adult Population*



*Because of the wording of the questionnaire, some assistant teachers in this category may have taken college credits unrelated to ECE.
Source: U.S. Census, 2000.

ECE-Related Degrees and Foreign Degrees

Family Child Care Providers

- 33% of licensed family child care providers with an associate degree or higher hold a degree related to early childhood education.
- 6% of providers with a bachelor's degree earned the degree from a foreign institution.

Center-Based Teachers

- 57% of center-based teachers with a bachelor's degree or higher, and 77 percent of teachers with an associate degree, hold a degree related to early childhood education.
- 8% of teachers with a bachelor's degree or higher earned the degree from a foreign institution.

How do levels of overall educational attainment, and training related to early childhood development, vary among members of the ECE workforce?

Levels of education among teachers vary by age. They vary among both teachers and providers by ethnicity, by ages of children served, and by centers' and homes' public subsidy status.

Variation by Age and Ethnicity

Age. Family child care providers' educational background does not vary by age. In contrast, more center teachers with BA or higher degrees are age 50 or older (33%) than teachers with AA degrees (19%) or teachers with less education (13%).

*Ethnicity.*² White, Non-Hispanic teachers and providers, compared to the ethnic distribution of their counterparts in the ECE workforce as a whole, have attained a BA degree or more at a higher rate. Latina teachers and providers, however, compared to the ethnic distribution of their counterparts in the ECE workforce as a whole, have attained a BA degree or more at a lower rate.

- White, Non-Hispanics comprise 74% of all licensed family child care providers, and 88% of providers with a BA or higher; they comprise 77% of all center-based teachers, and 83% of teachers with a BA or higher.
- Latinas comprise 26% of all providers, but only 12% of providers with a BA or higher; they comprise 10% of all teachers, but only 4% of teachers with a BA or higher.

Compared to Marin County adults of their ethnicity (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000), Latina and White, Non-Hispanic licensed providers and teachers have attained a BA or higher degree at a lower rate, while Latina teachers, attained a BA or higher degree at a proportionate rate:

- Among Latinas/Latinos: 14 % of providers, 18% of teachers, and 18% of Marin County adults have a BA or higher.
- Among White, Non-Hispanics: 56% of providers, 52% of teachers, and 56% of Marin County adults have a BA or higher.

² Because of sample size among other ethnic groups, our analysis focuses only on Latina and White, Non-Hispanic members of the ECE workforce.

Variation by Ages of Children Served and by Public Funding Status

The most significant variations along these dimensions are the following:

Age of Children Served

- In centers serving both infants and preschoolers, 36% of teachers have a BA degree or higher; in centers serving preschoolers only, 57% of teachers have such a degree.
- Family child care providers with BA or higher degrees care for more children ages three to five than providers with less education.

Public Funding Status

- In centers with a CDE or Head Start contract, 26% of teachers have a BA or higher; in centers receiving public subsidy through vouchers, 38% have such a degree; in centers receiving no public subsidy, 58%.
- Among licensed family child care providers caring for at least one child receiving child care subsidy, 80% participated in non-credit training during the past 12 months; among those caring for no such children, only 43% participated in such training.

How well prepared are licensed providers and center teachers to serve young children who are dual language learners or who have special needs?

To answer this question, we measured the number of non-credit training hours and college credits that providers and center teachers had received.

Training and Coursework Related to Dual Language Learners

In 2004, slightly more than one-fifth of children entering public kindergarten in Marin County were estimated to be dual language learners (California Department of Education, 2006), and it is likely that soon, many more young children in ECE programs will be dual language learners and/or live with family members who do not speak English. Yet very few members of Marin County's ECE workforce have participated in non-credit training or college coursework related to dual language learning:

- Only 17% of licensed providers have received non-credit training, and only 15% have completed college coursework, in this subject.
- Only 36% of centers employ at least one teacher with relevant non-credit training, and only 18% employ at least one teacher with relevant college coursework.

Training and Coursework Related to Working with Children with Special Needs

Over the last thirty years, ECE settings have become much more involved in providing services to children with special physical and developmental needs and/or disabilities, due to new understanding of and ability to identify developmental challenges, coupled with changes in federal law (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Much of the state's ECE workforce has participated in some level of professional development related to working with children with special needs – especially in programs serving at least one such child – largely because California law has provided funding for such training since 2000:

- 47% of licensed providers have received relevant non-credit training, and 20% have completed college coursework, in this subject.
- 74% of centers employ at least one teacher with relevant non-credit training, and 59% employ at least one teacher with relevant college coursework.
- Centers serving at least one child with special needs employ a higher percentage of teachers with relevant training or coursework.

Reflections on Key Findings

Educational Attainment

The varied educational profile of Marin County's ECE workforce – with some home-based providers and center staff achieving college degrees, and others holding high school diplomas and/or completing a few college credits – largely reflects the relatively low standards currently set by California law, as well as the differing standards governing various types of ECE programs. But while educational attainment and professional preparation vary by type of program, it is notable that for much of the ECE workforce, current levels of education and training well exceed what the law requires. With respect to proposed increases in educational requirements for teachers in publicly funded preschool programs, a significant portion of the ECE workforce may find such new requirements within reach or may have already met them, while others may find it daunting to pursue this new opportunity.

Workforce Diversity

Marin County's ECE workforce is somewhat more ethnically and linguistically diverse than its K-12 public school teachers. But while this diversity is a promising foundation on which to revamp and expand services for young children, the comparison with K-12 teachers can also obscure the stratification by ethnicity that does exist in the ECE workforce. Our data reveal substantial divisions by ethnicity and language that require attention: most child care center directors are White, Non-Hispanic, for example, whereas many more assistant teachers are women of color. Similarly, nearly one-half of assistant teachers and

home-based providers can communicate with children in a language other than English, whereas this is true for less than one-quarter of teachers and directors.

Marin County's challenge will be to intentionally maintain and expand its ECE workforce diversity, hand in hand with continuing efforts to upgrade the knowledge and skills of this workforce – in particular, proposals to increase educational standards for teachers in publicly funded preschools. This can only be done by investing in a range of appropriate supports that will truly allow people from a wide spectrum of cultural, educational and financial backgrounds to access professional development opportunities. A proactive strategy will be essential, including scholarships, tutoring, conveniently scheduled and located classes, and resources for students learning English as a second language. The goal must extend beyond building a diverse workforce to ensuring that such diversity is well distributed across all positions and all types of child care programs.

Recruitment and Retention

Given the documented relationship between staffing stability and program quality (Helburn, 1995), the persistence of high turnover in Marin County's ECE workforce is of serious concern. The earnings gap between kindergarten and ECE teachers, in particular, is likely to continue to fuel such turnover, particularly among those who have made the greatest investment in education and training. This study has also confirmed previous findings that the most educated segment of the center teacher workforce

is older than the teacher population as a whole (Herzenberg, Price & Bradley, 2005). Teachers with a BA or higher degree are more likely than others to be over age 50 and approaching retirement, at a time when the demand is rising for teachers with such qualifications. This suggests that in addition to helping current members of the ECE workforce achieve college degrees, Marin County needs a strategy to recruit college graduates to ECE teaching positions, including improvements in compensation, in order to make such employment more attractive to well-educated young candidates.

The age of the family child care workforce also raises questions about the supply of child care services in the future. Less than five percent of licensed providers are under 30, underscoring the need for more proactive recruitment strategies than are now in place.

Preparation to Work with Dual Language Learners and/or Children with Special Needs

Our data show that the majority of Marin County's ECE workforce has not engaged in coursework or non-credit training related to dual language learning, largely because such training and coursework are not generally available. This finding highlights the need to update courses of study at California's training institutions, both college- and community-based, and to expand the pool of instructors who are knowledgeable about this subject (Whitebook, Bellm, Lee & Sakai, 2005).

By contrast – reflecting an intentional strategy backed by state resources – many more teachers in the state have received training or college coursework related to serving children with special needs. A similar effort around dual language learning is much needed. Additionally, more advanced coursework and training in these subjects must be offered if we hope to build an ECE workforce that is well prepared to meet the diverse needs of Marin County's young children.

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References

In the last five years, with the availability of more resources for children from birth to age five flowing through local and state First 5 Commissions and other sources, there has been a concerted effort to expand professional development opportunities for the early care and education workforce, and to make these offerings more relevant and accessible. In the process of expanding resources, however, many of the limitations of the state's current professional development infrastructure have become more visible.

Now, as Marin County and various counties embark on creating publicly funded preschool programs, there is an opportunity to develop comprehensive state and local plans for professional development that are inclusive of teachers and providers in a variety of settings. As their foundation, such plans should reflect the latest information about what practitioners need to know and do in order to help children realize their potential.

This study has provided a snapshot of Marin County's early care and education workforce, capturing current strengths and areas in need of improvement. It is to be hoped that future assessments will document great strides toward creating an even more diverse, culturally competent workforce, well prepared to meet the needs of Marin County's young children.

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