

Finding the Gaps, Creating Opportunities: Research to Inform the Implementation of a
Coordinated System of Professional Development and Teacher Preparation

Sharon Ryan and Carrie Lobman

Graduate School of Education
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Financial Support for this study was provided by the Foundation for Child Development
and the Carnegie Corporation of New York

Getting Qualified: A Report on the Efforts of Preschool Teachers in New Jersey's *Abbott* Districts to Improve their Qualifications

Sharon Ryan and Debra J. Ackerman

This report describes the demographics, salaries, and work experience of teachers who work in *Abbott* preschools throughout New Jersey, as well as their efforts to obtain a BA and P-3 certification by the Court's 2004 deadline. The 689 teachers who participated in this study not only work in all 30 *Abbott* districts, but are affiliated with public schools, Head Starts, and community-based programs, as well. Although our response rate varied among districts and within each of these three auspices, our final sample included 270 public school teachers (39%), 94 Head Start teachers (14%), and 325 community-based teachers (47%).

The study itself was conducted in 2002-2003 and utilized a telephone interview protocol written by the authors. The protocol examined two key areas related to implementation of high quality preschool at the classroom level. The first area of the protocol queried participants regarding their background information and work experience and history. The second area examined the teacher credentials of our sample, and sought to gain input not only on the numbers of teachers working towards any increased qualification—including a P-3 certification—but anticipated completion dates, as well. Because many preschool teachers are also non-traditional students, the protocol elicited information on the reasons teachers are seeking to improve their qualifications and the supports and barriers that may be affecting their current educational endeavors.

Results

To ensure that accurate predictions could be made, the sample was weighted to represent the total 2003-2004 teaching population of 2825 teachers in the *Abbott* districts based on data provided by the New Jersey Department of Education. The results, then, are reported as percentages of this entire population.

Demographics:

- The average age of *Abbott* preschool teachers is 38 years old and 96% are female.
- 21.1% of the *Abbott* teaching population are from countries other than the United States, and most of these teachers work in either community-based settings or Head Start programs.
- Almost half of all *Abbott* preschool teachers are White (43.6%), 32.5% are African-American, and 5.8% are Hispanic. A small proportion of teachers in the *Abbott* districts are from Asian-American or Native American backgrounds.
- Race/ethnicity of the teaching population varies across program type, with the majority of public school teachers (69.6%) being White, and less than 25% being either African-American or Hispanic.
- In the community-based settings, 39.2% of teachers are African-American, 33.4% are White, and 19.1% are Hispanic.
- In Head Start programs, just over half of teachers are African-American (50.7%), 21% are Hispanic, and 17.5% are White.

Salaries/Experience:

- Preschool teachers in the *Abbott* districts receive an average salary of \$37,050, but the average salary of teachers in public schools is \$41,834, Head Starts \$34,200, and community-based settings \$34,440.
- 60% of the *Abbott* teaching population have worked in the classroom for 5 years or more.

Meeting the 2004 *Abbott* Mandate:

- 49.2% of the teaching population is certified and therefore already meets the mandate. In addition 32.9% of teachers who are enrolled in coursework anticipate finishing their degree requirements by the court-imposed deadline.
- Another 8% of teachers may potentially meet the mandate. Teachers within this group already have attained a BA, and while not enrolled in a credentialing program at the time of this study, could have enrolled since then and completed their credentialing coursework.
- 6.9% of *Abbott* preschool teachers who are also undertaking P-3 related coursework will not meet the deadline of September 2004. The majority of these teachers, however, have indicated that they will be able to complete their course requirements within 2 years or by September 2006.
- 2.7% of the teaching population is not attempting to meet the mandate at all. The teachers within this group do not have a Bachelor's degree and are not enrolled in any kind of coursework that may lead to an early childhood teaching credential.
- 33% of the teachers who are enrolled in some kind of teacher preparation program indicated that they intend to leave their positions once they became certified. 80% of these teachers are working in community-based or Head Start preschool settings, and when asked the job they wanted instead, the majority indicated that they wanted to be a teacher in a public school setting.

Recommendations

- The deadline to become certified should be extended until September 2006 for those teachers who are currently enrolled in P-3 related coursework and can demonstrate that they will be able to meet this new deadline.
- Specific incentives need to be developed to convince teachers in community-based settings to remain within their current settings once they obtain their certification. This is particularly important given that the teachers in Head Start and community-based settings more closely reflect the demographics of students in the *Abbott* districts than do teachers in public schools.
- Attention also needs to be paid to how teachers who already have a Bachelors degree but are not enrolled in any certification program might be supported to undertake an alternate route to certification.
- The variation between districts in terms of teachers' efforts and abilities to meet the mandate would suggest that some districts have been more successful in recruiting and/or supporting their preschool teachers. It would seem worthwhile to initiate some kind of investigation to identify the common strategies employed by these districts to ensure that teachers have been able to meet the mandate on time.

* Full version of report is available at <http://nieer.org>

Educating Preschool Teachers: Mapping the Teacher Preparation and Professional Development System in New Jersey

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin, & Debra J. Ackerman

This report maps the system of preschool teacher preparation and professional development in the state of New Jersey. The main purposes of this study were to: 1.) examine the capacity of the system to meet the ongoing demand for preschool teachers, 2.) to document the content of teacher preparation programs and professional development workshops, and 3.) to identify the gaps that exist between what standards recommend preschool teachers need to know and be able to do and the programs available to teachers in New Jersey.

One hundred and sixteen representatives from the 140 agencies and institutions that provide preschool teacher training were included in this study. The sample consisted of 12 representatives from four-year colleges, 17 representatives from community colleges, 29 representatives from Abbott districts, 42 representatives from non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts, and 17 representatives from resource and referral agencies. The interview protocol was conducted in 2003-2004. Interview protocols focused on the content of training offered, the current capacity of institutions, and outreach and partnerships that had been developed with other agencies.

Findings

Capacity and Content of Four-Year Colleges and Universities:

- Approximately 2,600 students enrolled in approved P-3 certification programs. 58% of these students are enrolled in traditional 4-year undergraduate certification programs, 24% are in an approved alternate route program, and the remaining students are enrolled in various post-baccalaureate programs including endorsement programs.
- 162 faculty members teach in early childhood programs in these universities- 75 are full-time faculty (half of which are tenured) and 87 are part-time and adjunct faculty.
- The mean ratio of full-time faculty to student is 1:43, with variation across institutions from 1:2 to 1:156.
- 61 of the full-time faculty members are white, 8 are African-American, five are Asian-American and one is Latina. Five of the 12 schools have entirely white early childhood faculty.
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in early childhood or related field (child development or another degree that specifically covers children younger than kindergarten age) and 85% have had direct employment experience with three and four year olds.
- Students currently in P-3 preparation programs at 2- or 4-year colleges are more likely to receive stand alone coursework in child development, curriculum, and literacy than in other content areas or diversity issues.
 - Almost 90% of programs devote an entire class to curriculum development.
 - Almost 80% of the programs offer literacy as a stand alone class, while some do not include social studies, math, music and art in any of the coursework.
 - 38% of the programs require student to take an entire class on working with

children with special needs, while three programs do not address this topic at all.

- Students in alternate route programs are less likely to receive coursework in the areas of math ($p < .05$), play ($p < .05$), and early childhood assessment methods ($p < .05$).

Capacity and Content at Two-Year Community Colleges

- Approximately 3,200 students were enrolled early childhood programs in community colleges.
- There are 105 early childhood faculty members- 34 full-time (60% tenured) and 71 part-time faculty.
- Mean ratio of students to faculty is 1:35, varying from 1:11 to 1:225.
- 81 faculty are White, 11 are African American, three are Latina, and 1 is Asian/Pacific Islander, 9 are unknown.
- Half of the schools (16 of 17 responded to this question) have all-White faculties
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in Early Childhood or a related field and 69% have experience working with children ages 3-4 years.
- Between 80 and 90% offer philosophical foundations, curriculum development, play, DAP, and classroom management as part or all of a required class.
- Literacy, art, and music/movement are all offered as a stand-alone class in over 50% of the community colleges.
- Over 50% of the colleges have an entire course devoted to working with young children with special needs, while only 12% devote a full class to working with children from diverse cultures and 6% devote a full class to issues of ELL.
- Community colleges that offer an Associates of Applied Science in early childhood (a non-transferable degree) are more likely to offer coursework in the areas of curriculum development, literacy, math, science, art, foundations and working with children with special needs than were schools with just an AA degree.

Capacity and Content of Agencies that Provide Professional Development

Abbott and non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts

- The 71 districts participating in this study offered a total of 1,127 workshops with more than 12,500 teachers attending during the 2003-2004.
- 50% of workshop trainers have a degree specializing in early childhood or a related field and 70% have had direct employment experience working with 3- and 4-year-old children.
- 40% of workshops offered by districts were related to early childhood curriculum while only 10% addressed diversity topics including multiculturalism, ELL, and working with children with special needs.
- Abbott districts are more likely than non-Abbott ECPA districts (significant at the $p < .05$ level) to offer workshops in assessment, setting up the classroom environment, child development, behavior management, DAP, working with children with special needs, and health and safety issues.

Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R)

- The 17 R&Rs offered 984 workshops this past year with a total of 3970 participants.
- Of the 159 workshop instructors employed at R&Rs, 64% have a degree in early childhood

or a related field and 78% had experience working with 3-and 4-year-olds.

- 100% of R&Rs offer training in behavior management, curriculum, and working with families and over 80% offer training in diversity, working with children with special needs.

Community Colleges

- 8 of the 17 community colleges offer not-for-credit workshops and trainings for preschool teachers.
- 115 workshops were offered at these community colleges last year with a total of 1,480 people attending.
- 90% of the 69 workshop instructors at community colleges have a degree in early childhood education or a related field and all have experience working with 3-and 4-year-old children.
- The highest proportion of workshops were offered in the area of curriculum practice and the fewest addressed diversity issues.

Outreach and Partnerships

For-Credit Partnerships

- 11 of the 2- and 4-year colleges were in partnerships with other agencies. Of these partnerships, 8 community colleges have articulation agreements with 4-year universities enabling students to count some of their early childhood coursework towards P-3 certification.
- Half of the 4-year colleges and universities reported partnering with (9) districts and (2) R&Rs.
- 5 community colleges offer for-credit coursework at a local district or R&R.

Not for Credit Partnerships

- 2 universities reported partnering with other 4-year universities to provide conferences and workshops.
- 22 districts reported working with a local consortium to provide professional development for their preschool teachers.
- 11 school districts collaborated with other districts to provide professional development.

Recommendations

As the findings from this study attest there is a wide range of training and certification programs available in this state should a preschool teacher want to both obtain a teaching credential and improve their expertise. However, the two components of teacher education, teacher preparation and professional development, continue to work primarily in isolation from one another and as a consequence, opportunities for effective and long lasting improvement in educational practice are being minimized. With the aim of forging further partnerships and linkages within and across programs and agencies we make the following recommendations:

Teacher Preparation Programs

- Two- and four-year colleges should create an agreed upon standard for student: faculty ratios to ensure adequate advisement about programs and coursework.
- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate

curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, 2- and 4-year colleges should engage in a self study or audit of the content of coursework.

- Two- and four-year colleges should examine the qualifications and expertise of faculty regarding diversity issues and take steps to ensure those faculties improve their knowledge and skills in these areas.
- The Commission on Higher Education should bring together the Deans of the 2- and 4-year colleges on a regular basis to discuss variability within the current system, and to develop agreed upon principles for hiring and training of faculty and staffing programs.

Ongoing Professional Development

- The state Department of Education (DOE) should assess whether districts have the administrative resources that they need to ensure that their preschool teachers receive appropriate training opportunities.
- The state DOE should require non-Abbott ECPA districts to follow the same guidelines for professional development as Abbott districts and should provide adequate resources to do so.
- School districts, R&Rs, and community colleges should build more effective partnerships to increase collaboration and reduce duplication in providing ongoing professional development to preschool teachers.

Towards Creating a Coordinated System

While there are valuable partnerships occurring across institutions, for the most part they appear to be ad hoc and individually created leaving those teaching in smaller districts and further from colleges and universities at a disadvantage. To ensure consistency and continuity in the development of the preschool teacher workforce, New Jersey must now target its financial and human resources to the development of a more coordinated system of teacher preparation and professional development. Currently there is no committee or agency charged with the responsibility of overseeing both professional development and teacher education for a specific sector. This coordination is particularly critical in preschool education because the workforce is extraordinarily diverse in qualifications, knowledge, and level of experience and is located in a range of settings that have historically been regulated differently. It is therefore recommended that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education.

Toward a Unified System of Early Childhood Teacher Education and Professional Development: Conversations with Stakeholders

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin

The report examines the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the creation of a new system of teacher preparation and professional development in New Jersey. The questions guiding this study were: 1) What do various stakeholders believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do, 2) What kinds of experiences do they believe contribute to this development, 3) What are the components of an effective system of teacher education and professional development and, 4) What do various stakeholders perceive to be the barriers and supports in the current system that influence the provision of quality teacher preparation and development experiences for preschool teachers?

Thirty-eight individuals participated in eight focus group interviews. The sample included 16 preschool teachers, 11 professional development providers or administrators, 5 teacher educators from 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, and 6 state policymakers. The interview protocols concentrated on four main topics: definitions of the knowledge, dispositions, and skills preschool teachers need to have, the content of current preparation and professional development experiences and perceived gaps in current offerings, barriers and supports in the current system, and ideas about improving the current system.

Summary of the Findings

Two themes emerged from the analysis of the focus group transcripts. The first theme addresses the relationship between the discourse of research concerning the knowledge base required by preschool teachers and what those in the field believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do. The second theme is concerned with the overall system of early childhood teacher development and examines some of the barriers and supports currently in place that hinder or aid the development of such a system in New Jersey.

Content and Form of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Similar to current research and literature on teacher preparation there is agreement that preschool teachers need a foundation in child development coupled with knowledge of various teaching strategies that will enable them to enact developmentally appropriate practices. Echoing the literature that teacher development opportunities must be linked to practice and engage teachers in collaborative inquiry (Lieberman & Miller, 2001), teachers and those who educate them also repeatedly talked about on-site learning experiences in which teachers educate one another. In order to optimize teacher learning, stakeholders agreed that training should be individualized and coordinated so that teachers build on their learning experiences. Alongside these points of agreement were three areas where stakeholders diverged in their views about the content and delivery of teacher education and training opportunities.

First, missing from these conversations is attention to the kinds of knowledge and skills that

national standards say teachers need to be able to work with students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. To be sure several teachers and teacher educators spoke about teachers having to know how to support families and children who often live in difficult circumstances but diversity as one of the everyday aspects of teaching no matter the context was not as prevalent in these conversations. Moreover, aside from literacy, there was also little attention given to the kinds of domain specific knowledge being called for in educational policies. While respondents mentioned math and science, there were no substantive ideas about how teachers could be prepared to teach these subjects. These responses suggest that there is currently a gap between what the current policy context is expecting preschool teachers to know and be able to do and the traditional practice of teacher education and professional development.

A second point of divergence is whether everything a teacher needs to be able to do can be taught or whether it also involves having a set of dispositions or traits that make one more suited to teaching. As administrators and professional development providers raised this issue more than anyone else, their concerns may reflect the difficulties in finding teaching staff that can connect with children on an emotional level. Yet, in identifying that preschool teachers need to be able to “love” children, they potentially also draw attention to the marginalization of the socio-emotional aspects of teaching in current policy discussions of early childhood. When coupled with administrators views that teachers also need to possess the communication and interpersonal skills to be able to work effectively with other adults, these responses suggest that some space must be made in the curriculum for these aspects of teaching in addition to the focus on diversity issues, foundational knowledge, and curriculum content.

A third tension arose between the relative value of onsite learning to teach experiences and classroom based coursework and workshops. While workshops and coursework were not discussed negatively, what was striking was that they were barely discussed at all. When asked what types of experiences are needed to develop high quality preschool teachers, participants from all stakeholder groups identified onsite learning that took place directly in preschool classrooms. However, despite the inclusion of mentors and master teachers in the new system, the bulk of teacher education and professional development still takes place in workshops and college classes.

The System of Preschool Teacher Development

Participants were aware and proud of the fact that a system of preschool preparation and professional development had been created in New Jersey in a relatively short period of time. It was recognized that this system was both preparing large numbers of certified teachers and providing those teachers with an astounding amount of professional development. Stakeholders identified pockets of strength at all levels of the system, including the leadership of Ellen Frede at the state level, the implementation of special programs to support non-traditional students at the colleges and universities, and the time and resources put aside for professional development in the districts and childcare centers. Many participants, whether they were teachers, professional development providers, directors, teacher educators or policy makers recognized that the programs that had been created were improving the quality of early childhood teaching in New Jersey and were therefore benefiting some of the state’s poorest children.

While these and other successes produced a certain amount of optimism among participants, stakeholders also identified multiple barriers to the creation of a high quality system of early childhood teacher education. These barriers fell into three categories: a bureaucracy that seemed to hinder rather than support teachers upgrading their skills and credentials, insufficient standards for what constituted a high quality preschool teacher, and a lack of coordination and partnerships between and across agencies.

There was general concern about the bureaucratic aspects of the system of early childhood teacher education and professional development. As one community college teacher educator remarked, “Systems have a very hard time accommodating.” Although the system she is referring to is only a few years old, some stakeholders believed that it had already taken on some of the negative aspects of an established bureaucracy and that this was a barrier to quality. While the teachers and administrators gave personal accountings of problems with the bureaucracy, the participants in the policymakers’ focus group drew attention to the lack of oversight and central organization that they believed plagued the system. This lack of a centralized leadership may be one factor in producing a system that did not provide sufficient access to information, had substantial variability in quality, and a high level of disorganization.

A second barrier identified by stakeholders, was the perceived variability in the quality of teacher preparation programs and training opportunities. Stakeholders argued for the need to maintain high expectations or standards for the field to ensure that every classroom was staffed by a high quality teacher. While standards were a concern at district and state levels, both policymakers and higher education professors stressed the need for high academic expectations at the colleges and universities. To ensure higher expectations meant that faculty and their institutions would have to make changes and would have to be more stringent about who was accepted into their programs and what was required of them for certification and graduation. For other teacher educators, a key way to begin improving the system was not to only raise the standards about who and who does not enter and succeed in teacher preparation programs but to also create capacity in the system to support these teachers through an increase in the numbers of leaders who are early childhood specialists. As one 4-year college participant so aptly puts it, “We’re not building leaders. We’re not building educators. We’re not building the capacity.” Policy makers, on the other hand, stressed the need to regulate higher education by requiring certification programs to be nationally accredited and was putting more stringent codes in place that require programs to include particular topics as part of their coursework.

The final barrier to creating a high quality workforce is the lack of partnerships occurring between universities and school districts, and between 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, as well as the various agencies and individuals providing professional development. Every stakeholder was able to identify areas where the system or “non-system” as it has been called could be improved through partnerships, and continuity within and across components of the system. With preschool teacher preparation and professional development at the forefront of current educational discourse, these responses highlight the future directions for those of us responsible for educating teachers.

Recommendations

- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, institutions of higher education should:
 - Develop a communication campaign to disseminate information about the knowledge base required to be an effective preschool teacher.
 - Engage in a self-study or audit of the content of coursework by bringing teacher educators together along with the syllabi for their courses to discuss how they approach the teaching of particular topics and the strategies they use to assist students with difficult content.
 - Examine exemplary program in other states to elicit ideas and new perspectives.

- In response to the concerns raised by all stakeholders that there is a lack of expertise at all levels of the current system it is recommended that some effort be made to recruit and expand the numbers of qualified and experienced early childhood leaders in the state. To enact this recommendation will require not only providing enough fiscal support to the hiring of new faculty and early childhood specialists, but will also necessitate turning our attention towards the creation of new programs of training in early childhood leadership where currently only certification or doctoral programs exist.

- To ensure that collaborations between various levels of the system do not occur by happenstance or through individualized action alone we recommend that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education. This agency would:
 - Promote and support partnerships between agencies at different levels of the system.
 - Serve as a clearinghouse for partnerships and collaborations between and across levels of the professional development and teacher preparation system.
 - Ensure that the system as a whole is developing programs and services that meet the needs of the preschool workforce and the children that they serve.

Finding the Gaps, Creating Opportunities: Research to Inform the Implementation of a
Coordinated System of Professional Development and Teacher Preparation

Sharon Ryan and Carrie Lobman

Graduate School of Education
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Financial Support for this study was provided by the Foundation for Child Development
and the Carnegie Corporation of New York

Getting Qualified: A Report on the Efforts of Preschool Teachers in New Jersey's *Abbott* Districts to Improve their Qualifications

Sharon Ryan and Debra J. Ackerman

This report describes the demographics, salaries, and work experience of teachers who work in *Abbott* preschools throughout New Jersey, as well as their efforts to obtain a BA and P-3 certification by the Court's 2004 deadline. The 689 teachers who participated in this study not only work in all 30 *Abbott* districts, but are affiliated with public schools, Head Starts, and community-based programs, as well. Although our response rate varied among districts and within each of these three auspices, our final sample included 270 public school teachers (39%), 94 Head Start teachers (14%), and 325 community-based teachers (47%).

The study itself was conducted in 2002-2003 and utilized a telephone interview protocol written by the authors. The protocol examined two key areas related to implementation of high quality preschool at the classroom level. The first area of the protocol queried participants regarding their background information and work experience and history. The second area examined the teacher credentials of our sample, and sought to gain input not only on the numbers of teachers working towards any increased qualification—including a P-3 certification—but anticipated completion dates, as well. Because many preschool teachers are also non-traditional students, the protocol elicited information on the reasons teachers are seeking to improve their qualifications and the supports and barriers that may be affecting their current educational endeavors.

Results

To ensure that accurate predictions could be made, the sample was weighted to represent the total 2003-2004 teaching population of 2825 teachers in the *Abbott* districts based on data provided by the New Jersey Department of Education. The results, then, are reported as percentages of this entire population.

Demographics:

- The average age of *Abbott* preschool teachers is 38 years old and 96% are female.
- 21.1% of the *Abbott* teaching population are from countries other than the United States, and most of these teachers work in either community-based settings or Head Start programs.
- Almost half of all *Abbott* preschool teachers are White (43.6%), 32.5% are African-American, and 5.8% are Hispanic. A small proportion of teachers in the *Abbott* districts are from Asian-American or Native American backgrounds.
- Race/ethnicity of the teaching population varies across program type, with the majority of public school teachers (69.6%) being White, and less than 25% being either African-American or Hispanic.
- In the community-based settings, 39.2% of teachers are African-American, 33.4% are White, and 19.1% are Hispanic.
- In Head Start programs, just over half of teachers are African-American (50.7%), 21% are Hispanic, and 17.5% are White.

Salaries/Experience:

- Preschool teachers in the *Abbott* districts receive an average salary of \$37,050, but the average salary of teachers in public schools is \$41,834, Head Starts \$34,200, and community-based settings \$34,440.
- 60% of the *Abbott* teaching population have worked in the classroom for 5 years or more.

Meeting the 2004 *Abbott* Mandate:

- 49.2% of the teaching population is certified and therefore already meets the mandate. In addition 32.9% of teachers who are enrolled in coursework anticipate finishing their degree requirements by the court-imposed deadline.
- Another 8% of teachers may potentially meet the mandate. Teachers within this group already have attained a BA, and while not enrolled in a credentialing program at the time of this study, could have enrolled since then and completed their credentialing coursework.
- 6.9% of *Abbott* preschool teachers who are also undertaking P-3 related coursework will not meet the deadline of September 2004. The majority of these teachers, however, have indicated that they will be able to complete their course requirements within 2 years or by September 2006.
- 2.7% of the teaching population is not attempting to meet the mandate at all. The teachers within this group do not have a Bachelor's degree and are not enrolled in any kind of coursework that may lead to an early childhood teaching credential.
- 33% of the teachers who are enrolled in some kind of teacher preparation program indicated that they intend to leave their positions once they became certified. 80% of these teachers are working in community-based or Head Start preschool settings, and when asked the job they wanted instead, the majority indicated that they wanted to be a teacher in a public school setting.

Recommendations

- The deadline to become certified should be extended until September 2006 for those teachers who are currently enrolled in P-3 related coursework and can demonstrate that they will be able to meet this new deadline.
- Specific incentives need to be developed to convince teachers in community-based settings to remain within their current settings once they obtain their certification. This is particularly important given that the teachers in Head Start and community-based settings more closely reflect the demographics of students in the *Abbott* districts than do teacher in public schools.
- Attention also needs to be paid to how teachers who already have a Bachelors degree but are not enrolled in any certification program might be supported to undertake an alternate route to certification.
- The variation between districts in terms of teachers' efforts and abilities to meet the mandate would suggest that some districts have been more successful in recruiting and/or supporting their preschool teachers. It would seem worthwhile to initiate some kind of investigation to identify the common strategies employed by these districts to ensure that teachers have been able to meet the mandate on time.

* Full version of report is available at <http://nieer.org>

Educating Preschool Teachers: Mapping the Teacher Preparation and Professional Development System in New Jersey

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin, & Debra J. Ackerman

This report maps the system of preschool teacher preparation and professional development in the state of New Jersey. The main purposes of this study were to: 1.) examine the capacity of the system to meet the ongoing demand for preschool teachers, 2.) to document the content of teacher preparation programs and professional development workshops, and 3.) to identify the gaps that exist between what standards recommend preschool teachers need to know and be able to do and the programs available to teachers in New Jersey.

One hundred and sixteen representatives from the 140 agencies and institutions that provide preschool teacher training were included in this study. The sample consisted of 12 representatives from four-year colleges, 17 representatives from community colleges, 29 representatives from Abbott districts, 42 representatives from non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts, and 17 representatives from resource and referral agencies. The interview protocol was conducted in 2003-2004. Interview protocols focused on the content of training offered, the current capacity of institutions, and outreach and partnerships that had been developed with other agencies.

Findings

Capacity and Content of Four-Year Colleges and Universities:

- Approximately 2,600 students enrolled in approved P-3 certification programs. 58% of these students are enrolled in traditional 4-year undergraduate certification programs, 24% are in an approved alternate route program, and the remaining students are enrolled in various post-baccalaureate programs including endorsement programs.
- 162 faculty members teach in early childhood programs in these universities- 75 are full-time faculty (half of which are tenured) and 87 are part-time and adjunct faculty.
- The mean ratio of full-time faculty to student is 1:43, with variation across institutions from 1:2 to 1:156.
- 61 of the full-time faculty members are white, 8 are African-American, five are Asian-American and one is Latina. Five of the 12 schools have entirely white early childhood faculty.
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in early childhood or related field (child development or another degree that specifically covers children younger than kindergarten age) and 85% have had direct employment experience with three and four year olds.
- Students currently in P-3 preparation programs at 2- or 4-year colleges are more likely to receive stand alone coursework in child development, curriculum, and literacy than in other content areas or diversity issues.
 - Almost 90% of programs devote an entire class to curriculum development.
 - Almost 80% of the programs offer literacy as a stand alone class, while some do not include social studies, math, music and art in any of the coursework.
 - 38% of the programs require student to take an entire class on working with

children with special needs, while three programs do not address this topic at all.

- Students in alternate route programs are less likely to receive coursework in the areas of math ($p < .05$), play ($p < .05$), and early childhood assessment methods ($p < .05$).

Capacity and Content at Two-Year Community Colleges

- Approximately 3,200 students were enrolled early childhood programs in community colleges.
- There are 105 early childhood faculty members- 34 full-time (60% tenured) and 71 part-time faculty.
- Mean ratio of students to faculty is 1:35, varying from 1:11 to 1:225.
- 81 faculty are White, 11 are African American, three are Latina, and 1 is Asian/Pacific Islander, 9 are unknown.
- Half of the schools (16 of 17 responded to this question) have all-White faculties
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in Early Childhood or a related field and 69% have experience working with children ages 3-4 years.
- Between 80 and 90% offer philosophical foundations, curriculum development, play, DAP, and classroom management as part or all of a required class.
- Literacy, art, and music/movement are all offered as a stand-alone class in over 50% of the community colleges.
- Over 50% of the colleges have an entire course devoted to working with young children with special needs, while only 12% devote a full class to working with children from diverse cultures and 6% devote a full class to issues of ELL.
- Community colleges that offer an Associates of Applied Science in early childhood (a non-transferable degree) are more likely to offer coursework in the areas of curriculum development, literacy, math, science, art, foundations and working with children with special needs than were schools with just an AA degree.

Capacity and Content of Agencies that Provide Professional Development

Abbott and non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts

- The 71 districts participating in this study offered a total of 1,127 workshops with more than 12,500 teachers attending during the 2003-2004.
- 50% of workshop trainers have a degree specializing in early childhood or a related field and 70% have had direct employment experience working with 3- and 4-year-old children.
- 40% of workshops offered by districts were related to early childhood curriculum while only 10% addressed diversity topics including multiculturalism, ELL, and working with children with special needs.
- Abbott districts are more likely than non-Abbott ECPA districts (significant at the $p < .05$ level) to offer workshops in assessment, setting up the classroom environment, child development, behavior management, DAP, working with children with special needs, and health and safety issues.

Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R)

- The 17 R&Rs offered 984 workshops this past year with a total of 3970 participants.
- Of the 159 workshop instructors employed at R&Rs, 64% have a degree in early childhood

or a related field and 78% had experience working with 3-and 4-year-olds.

- 100% of R&Rs offer training in behavior management, curriculum, and working with families and over 80% offer training in diversity, working with children with special needs.

Community Colleges

- 8 of the 17 community colleges offer not-for-credit workshops and trainings for preschool teachers.
- 115 workshops were offered at these community colleges last year with a total of 1,480 people attending.
- 90% of the 69 workshop instructors at community colleges have a degree in early childhood education or a related field and all have experience working with 3-and 4-year-old children.
- The highest proportion of workshops were offered in the area of curriculum practice and the fewest addressed diversity issues.

Outreach and Partnerships

For-Credit Partnerships

- 11 of the 2- and 4-year colleges were in partnerships with other agencies. Of these partnerships, 8 community colleges have articulation agreements with 4-year universities enabling students to count some of their early childhood coursework towards P-3 certification.
- Half of the 4-year colleges and universities reported partnering with (9) districts and (2) R&Rs.
- 5 community colleges offer for-credit coursework at a local district or R&R.

Not for Credit Partnerships

- 2 universities reported partnering with other 4-year universities to provide conferences and workshops.
- 22 districts reported working with a local consortium to provide professional development for their preschool teachers.
- 11 school districts collaborated with other districts to provide professional development.

Recommendations

As the findings from this study attest there is a wide range of training and certification programs available in this state should a preschool teacher want to both obtain a teaching credential and improve their expertise. However, the two components of teacher education, teacher preparation and professional development, continue to work primarily in isolation from one another and as a consequence, opportunities for effective and long lasting improvement in educational practice are being minimized. With the aim of forging further partnerships and linkages within and across programs and agencies we make the following recommendations:

Teacher Preparation Programs

- Two- and four-year colleges should create an agreed upon standard for student: faculty ratios to ensure adequate advisement about programs and coursework.
- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate

curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, 2- and 4-year colleges should engage in a self study or audit of the content of coursework.

- Two- and four-year colleges should examine the qualifications and expertise of faculty regarding diversity issues and take steps to ensure those faculties improve their knowledge and skills in these areas.
- The Commission on Higher Education should bring together the Deans of the 2- and 4-year colleges on a regular basis to discuss variability within the current system, and to develop agreed upon principles for hiring and training of faculty and staffing programs.

Ongoing Professional Development

- The state Department of Education (DOE) should assess whether districts have the administrative resources that they need to ensure that their preschool teachers receive appropriate training opportunities.
- The state DOE should require non-Abbott ECPA districts to follow the same guidelines for professional development as Abbott districts and should provide adequate resources to do so.
- School districts, R&Rs, and community colleges should build more effective partnerships to increase collaboration and reduce duplication in providing ongoing professional development to preschool teachers.

Towards Creating a Coordinated System

While there are valuable partnerships occurring across institutions, for the most part they appear to be ad hoc and individually created leaving those teaching in smaller districts and further from colleges and universities at a disadvantage. To ensure consistency and continuity in the development of the preschool teacher workforce, New Jersey must now target its financial and human resources to the development of a more coordinated system of teacher preparation and professional development. Currently there is no committee or agency charged with the responsibility of overseeing both professional development and teacher education for a specific sector. This coordination is particularly critical in preschool education because the workforce is extraordinarily diverse in qualifications, knowledge, and level of experience and is located in a range of settings that have historically been regulated differently. It is therefore recommended that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education.

Toward a Unified System of Early Childhood Teacher Education and Professional Development: Conversations with Stakeholders

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin

The report examines the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the creation of a new system of teacher preparation and professional development in New Jersey. The questions guiding this study were: 1) What do various stakeholders believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do, 2) What kinds of experiences do they believe contribute to this development, 3) What are the components of an effective system of teacher education and professional development and, 4) What do various stakeholders perceive to be the barriers and supports in the current system that influence the provision of quality teacher preparation and development experiences for preschool teachers?

Thirty-eight individuals participated in eight focus group interviews. The sample included 16 preschool teachers, 11 professional development providers or administrators, 5 teacher educators from 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, and 6 state policymakers. The interview protocols concentrated on four main topics: definitions of the knowledge, dispositions, and skills preschool teachers need to have, the content of current preparation and professional development experiences and perceived gaps in current offerings, barriers and supports in the current system, and ideas about improving the current system.

Summary of the Findings

Two themes emerged from the analysis of the focus group transcripts. The first theme addresses the relationship between the discourse of research concerning the knowledge base required by preschool teachers and what those in the field believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do. The second theme is concerned with the overall system of early childhood teacher development and examines some of the barriers and supports currently in place that hinder or aid the development of such a system in New Jersey.

Content and Form of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Similar to current research and literature on teacher preparation there is agreement that preschool teachers need a foundation in child development coupled with knowledge of various teaching strategies that will enable them to enact developmentally appropriate practices. Echoing the literature that teacher development opportunities must be linked to practice and engage teachers in collaborative inquiry (Lieberman & Miller, 2001), teachers and those who educate them also repeatedly talked about on-site learning experiences in which teachers educate one another. In order to optimize teacher learning, stakeholders agreed that training should be individualized and coordinated so that teachers build on their learning experiences. Alongside these points of agreement were three areas where stakeholders diverged in their views about the content and delivery of teacher education and training opportunities.

First, missing from these conversations is attention to the kinds of knowledge and skills that

national standards say teachers need to be able to work with students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. To be sure several teachers and teacher educators spoke about teachers having to know how to support families and children who often live in difficult circumstances but diversity as one of the everyday aspects of teaching no matter the context was not as prevalent in these conversations. Moreover, aside from literacy, there was also little attention given to the kinds of domain specific knowledge being called for in educational policies. While respondents mentioned math and science, there were no substantive ideas about how teachers could be prepared to teach these subjects. These responses suggest that there is currently a gap between what the current policy context is expecting preschool teachers to know and be able to do and the traditional practice of teacher education and professional development.

A second point of divergence is whether everything a teacher needs to be able to do can be taught or whether it also involves having a set of dispositions or traits that make one more suited to teaching. As administrators and professional development providers raised this issue more than anyone else, their concerns may reflect the difficulties in finding teaching staff that can connect with children on an emotional level. Yet, in identifying that preschool teachers need to be able to “love” children, they potentially also draw attention to the marginalization of the socio-emotional aspects of teaching in current policy discussions of early childhood. When coupled with administrators views that teachers also need to possess the communication and interpersonal skills to be able to work effectively with other adults, these responses suggest that some space must be made in the curriculum for these aspects of teaching in addition to the focus on diversity issues, foundational knowledge, and curriculum content.

A third tension arose between the relative value of onsite learning to teach experiences and classroom based coursework and workshops. While workshops and coursework were not discussed negatively, what was striking was that they were barely discussed at all. When asked what types of experiences are needed to develop high quality preschool teachers, participants from all stakeholder groups identified onsite learning that took place directly in preschool classrooms. However, despite the inclusion of mentors and master teachers in the new system, the bulk of teacher education and professional development still takes place in workshops and college classes.

The System of Preschool Teacher Development

Participants were aware and proud of the fact that a system of preschool preparation and professional development had been created in New Jersey in a relatively short period of time. It was recognized that this system was both preparing large numbers of certified teachers and providing those teachers with an astounding amount of professional development. Stakeholders identified pockets of strength at all levels of the system, including the leadership of Ellen Frede at the state level, the implementation of special programs to support non-traditional students at the colleges and universities, and the time and resources put aside for professional development in the districts and childcare centers. Many participants, whether they were teachers, professional development providers, directors, teacher educators or policy makers recognized that the programs that had been created were improving the quality of early childhood teaching in New Jersey and were therefore benefiting some of the state’s poorest children.

While these and other successes produced a certain amount of optimism among participants, stakeholders also identified multiple barriers to the creation of a high quality system of early childhood teacher education. These barriers fell into three categories: a bureaucracy that seemed to hinder rather than support teachers upgrading their skills and credentials, insufficient standards for what constituted a high quality preschool teacher, and a lack of coordination and partnerships between and across agencies.

There was general concern about the bureaucratic aspects of the system of early childhood teacher education and professional development. As one community college teacher educator remarked, “Systems have a very hard time accommodating.” Although the system she is referring to is only a few years old, some stakeholders believed that it had already taken on some of the negative aspects of an established bureaucracy and that this was a barrier to quality. While the teachers and administrators gave personal accountings of problems with the bureaucracy, the participants in the policymakers’ focus group drew attention to the lack of oversight and central organization that they believed plagued the system. This lack of a centralized leadership may be one factor in producing a system that did not provide sufficient access to information, had substantial variability in quality, and a high level of disorganization.

A second barrier identified by stakeholders, was the perceived variability in the quality of teacher preparation programs and training opportunities. Stakeholders argued for the need to maintain high expectations or standards for the field to ensure that every classroom was staffed by a high quality teacher. While standards were a concern at district and state levels, both policymakers and higher education professors stressed the need for high academic expectations at the colleges and universities. To ensure higher expectations meant that faculty and their institutions would have to make changes and would have to be more stringent about who was accepted into their programs and what was required of them for certification and graduation. For other teacher educators, a key way to begin improving the system was not to only raise the standards about who and who does not enter and succeed in teacher preparation programs but to also create capacity in the system to support these teachers through an increase in the numbers of leaders who are early childhood specialists. As one 4-year college participant so aptly puts it, “We’re not building leaders. We’re not building educators. We’re not building the capacity.” Policy makers, on the other hand, stressed the need to regulate higher education by requiring certification programs to be nationally accredited and was putting more stringent codes in place that require programs to include particular topics as part of their coursework.

The final barrier to creating a high quality workforce is the lack of partnerships occurring between universities and school districts, and between 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, as well as the various agencies and individuals providing professional development. Every stakeholder was able to identify areas where the system or “non-system” as it has been called could be improved through partnerships, and continuity within and across components of the system. With preschool teacher preparation and professional development at the forefront of current educational discourse, these responses highlight the future directions for those of us responsible for educating teachers.

Recommendations

- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, institutions of higher education should:
 - Develop a communication campaign to disseminate information about the knowledge base required to be an effective preschool teacher.
 - Engage in a self-study or audit of the content of coursework by bringing teacher educators together along with the syllabi for their courses to discuss how they approach the teaching of particular topics and the strategies they use to assist students with difficult content.
 - Examine exemplary program in other states to elicit ideas and new perspectives.

- In response to the concerns raised by all stakeholders that there is a lack of expertise at all levels of the current system it is recommended that some effort be made to recruit and expand the numbers of qualified and experienced early childhood leaders in the state. To enact this recommendation will require not only providing enough fiscal support to the hiring of new faculty and early childhood specialists, but will also necessitate turning our attention towards the creation of new programs of training in early childhood leadership where currently only certification or doctoral programs exist.

- To ensure that collaborations between various levels of the system do not occur by happenstance or through individualized action alone we recommend that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education. This agency would:
 - Promote and support partnerships between agencies at different levels of the system.
 - Serve as a clearinghouse for partnerships and collaborations between and across levels of the professional development and teacher preparation system.
 - Ensure that the system as a whole is developing programs and services that meet the needs of the preschool workforce and the children that they serve.

Finding the Gaps, Creating Opportunities: Research to Inform the Implementation of a
Coordinated System of Professional Development and Teacher Preparation

Sharon Ryan and Carrie Lobman

Graduate School of Education
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Financial Support for this study was provided by the Foundation for Child Development
and the Carnegie Corporation of New York

Getting Qualified: A Report on the Efforts of Preschool Teachers in New Jersey's *Abbott* Districts to Improve their Qualifications

Sharon Ryan and Debra J. Ackerman

This report describes the demographics, salaries, and work experience of teachers who work in *Abbott* preschools throughout New Jersey, as well as their efforts to obtain a BA and P-3 certification by the Court's 2004 deadline. The 689 teachers who participated in this study not only work in all 30 *Abbott* districts, but are affiliated with public schools, Head Starts, and community-based programs, as well. Although our response rate varied among districts and within each of these three auspices, our final sample included 270 public school teachers (39%), 94 Head Start teachers (14%), and 325 community-based teachers (47%).

The study itself was conducted in 2002-2003 and utilized a telephone interview protocol written by the authors. The protocol examined two key areas related to implementation of high quality preschool at the classroom level. The first area of the protocol queried participants regarding their background information and work experience and history. The second area examined the teacher credentials of our sample, and sought to gain input not only on the numbers of teachers working towards any increased qualification—including a P-3 certification—but anticipated completion dates, as well. Because many preschool teachers are also non-traditional students, the protocol elicited information on the reasons teachers are seeking to improve their qualifications and the supports and barriers that may be affecting their current educational endeavors.

Results

To ensure that accurate predictions could be made, the sample was weighted to represent the total 2003-2004 teaching population of 2825 teachers in the *Abbott* districts based on data provided by the New Jersey Department of Education. The results, then, are reported as percentages of this entire population.

Demographics:

- The average age of *Abbott* preschool teachers is 38 years old and 96% are female.
- 21.1% of the *Abbott* teaching population are from countries other than the United States, and most of these teachers work in either community-based settings or Head Start programs.
- Almost half of all *Abbott* preschool teachers are White (43.6%), 32.5% are African-American, and 5.8% are Hispanic. A small proportion of teachers in the *Abbott* districts are from Asian-American or Native American backgrounds.
- Race/ethnicity of the teaching population varies across program type, with the majority of public school teachers (69.6%) being White, and less than 25% being either African-American or Hispanic.
- In the community-based settings, 39.2% of teachers are African-American, 33.4% are White, and 19.1% are Hispanic.
- In Head Start programs, just over half of teachers are African-American (50.7%), 21% are Hispanic, and 17.5% are White.

Salaries/Experience:

- Preschool teachers in the *Abbott* districts receive an average salary of \$37,050, but the average salary of teachers in public schools is \$41,834, Head Starts \$34,200, and community-based settings \$34,440.
- 60% of the *Abbott* teaching population have worked in the classroom for 5 years or more.

Meeting the 2004 *Abbott* Mandate:

- 49.2% of the teaching population is certified and therefore already meets the mandate. In addition 32.9% of teachers who are enrolled in coursework anticipate finishing their degree requirements by the court-imposed deadline.
- Another 8% of teachers may potentially meet the mandate. Teachers within this group already have attained a BA, and while not enrolled in a credentialing program at the time of this study, could have enrolled since then and completed their credentialing coursework.
- 6.9% of *Abbott* preschool teachers who are also undertaking P-3 related coursework will not meet the deadline of September 2004. The majority of these teachers, however, have indicated that they will be able to complete their course requirements within 2 years or by September 2006.
- 2.7% of the teaching population is not attempting to meet the mandate at all. The teachers within this group do not have a Bachelor's degree and are not enrolled in any kind of coursework that may lead to an early childhood teaching credential.
- 33% of the teachers who are enrolled in some kind of teacher preparation program indicated that they intend to leave their positions once they became certified. 80% of these teachers are working in community-based or Head Start preschool settings, and when asked the job they wanted instead, the majority indicated that they wanted to be a teacher in a public school setting.

Recommendations

- The deadline to become certified should be extended until September 2006 for those teachers who are currently enrolled in P-3 related coursework and can demonstrate that they will be able to meet this new deadline.
- Specific incentives need to be developed to convince teachers in community-based settings to remain within their current settings once they obtain their certification. This is particularly important given that the teachers in Head Start and community-based settings more closely reflect the demographics of students in the *Abbott* districts than do teachers in public schools.
- Attention also needs to be paid to how teachers who already have a Bachelors degree but are not enrolled in any certification program might be supported to undertake an alternate route to certification.
- The variation between districts in terms of teachers' efforts and abilities to meet the mandate would suggest that some districts have been more successful in recruiting and/or supporting their preschool teachers. It would seem worthwhile to initiate some kind of investigation to identify the common strategies employed by these districts to ensure that teachers have been able to meet the mandate on time.

* Full version of report is available at <http://nieer.org>

Educating Preschool Teachers: Mapping the Teacher Preparation and Professional Development System in New Jersey

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin, & Debra J. Ackerman

This report maps the system of preschool teacher preparation and professional development in the state of New Jersey. The main purposes of this study were to: 1.) examine the capacity of the system to meet the ongoing demand for preschool teachers, 2.) to document the content of teacher preparation programs and professional development workshops, and 3.) to identify the gaps that exist between what standards recommend preschool teachers need to know and be able to do and the programs available to teachers in New Jersey.

One hundred and sixteen representatives from the 140 agencies and institutions that provide preschool teacher training were included in this study. The sample consisted of 12 representatives from four-year colleges, 17 representatives from community colleges, 29 representatives from Abbott districts, 42 representatives from non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts, and 17 representatives from resource and referral agencies. The interview protocol was conducted in 2003-2004. Interview protocols focused on the content of training offered, the current capacity of institutions, and outreach and partnerships that had been developed with other agencies.

Findings

Capacity and Content of Four-Year Colleges and Universities:

- Approximately 2,600 students enrolled in approved P-3 certification programs. 58% of these students are enrolled in traditional 4-year undergraduate certification programs, 24% are in an approved alternate route program, and the remaining students are enrolled in various post-baccalaureate programs including endorsement programs.
- 162 faculty members teach in early childhood programs in these universities- 75 are full-time faculty (half of which are tenured) and 87 are part-time and adjunct faculty.
- The mean ratio of full-time faculty to student is 1:43, with variation across institutions from 1:2 to 1:156.
- 61 of the full-time faculty members are white, 8 are African-American, five are Asian-American and one is Latina. Five of the 12 schools have entirely white early childhood faculty.
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in early childhood or related field (child development or another degree that specifically covers children younger than kindergarten age) and 85% have had direct employment experience with three and four year olds.
- Students currently in P-3 preparation programs at 2- or 4-year colleges are more likely to receive stand alone coursework in child development, curriculum, and literacy than in other content areas or diversity issues.
 - Almost 90% of programs devote an entire class to curriculum development.
 - Almost 80% of the programs offer literacy as a stand alone class, while some do not include social studies, math, music and art in any of the coursework.
 - 38% of the programs require student to take an entire class on working with

children with special needs, while three programs do not address this topic at all.

- Students in alternate route programs are less likely to receive coursework in the areas of math ($p < .05$), play ($p < .05$), and early childhood assessment methods ($p < .05$).

Capacity and Content at Two-Year Community Colleges

- Approximately 3,200 students were enrolled early childhood programs in community colleges.
- There are 105 early childhood faculty members- 34 full-time (60% tenured) and 71 part-time faculty.
- Mean ratio of students to faculty is 1:35, varying from 1:11 to 1:225.
- 81 faculty are White, 11 are African American, three are Latina, and 1 is Asian/Pacific Islander, 9 are unknown.
- Half of the schools (16 of 17 responded to this question) have all-White faculties
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in Early Childhood or a related field and 69% have experience working with children ages 3-4 years.
- Between 80 and 90% offer philosophical foundations, curriculum development, play, DAP, and classroom management as part or all of a required class.
- Literacy, art, and music/movement are all offered as a stand-alone class in over 50% of the community colleges.
- Over 50% of the colleges have an entire course devoted to working with young children with special needs, while only 12% devote a full class to working with children from diverse cultures and 6% devote a full class to issues of ELL.
- Community colleges that offer an Associates of Applied Science in early childhood (a non-transferable degree) are more likely to offer coursework in the areas of curriculum development, literacy, math, science, art, foundations and working with children with special needs than were schools with just an AA degree.

Capacity and Content of Agencies that Provide Professional Development

Abbott and non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts

- The 71 districts participating in this study offered a total of 1,127 workshops with more than 12,500 teachers attending during the 2003-2004.
- 50% of workshop trainers have a degree specializing in early childhood or a related field and 70% have had direct employment experience working with 3- and 4-year-old children.
- 40% of workshops offered by districts were related to early childhood curriculum while only 10% addressed diversity topics including multiculturalism, ELL, and working with children with special needs.
- Abbott districts are more likely than non-Abbott ECPA districts (significant at the $p < .05$ level) to offer workshops in assessment, setting up the classroom environment, child development, behavior management, DAP, working with children with special needs, and health and safety issues.

Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R)

- The 17 R&Rs offered 984 workshops this past year with a total of 3970 participants.
- Of the 159 workshop instructors employed at R&Rs, 64% have a degree in early childhood

or a related field and 78% had experience working with 3-and 4-year-olds.

- 100% of R&Rs offer training in behavior management, curriculum, and working with families and over 80% offer training in diversity, working with children with special needs.

Community Colleges

- 8 of the 17 community colleges offer not-for-credit workshops and trainings for preschool teachers.
- 115 workshops were offered at these community colleges last year with a total of 1,480 people attending.
- 90% of the 69 workshop instructors at community colleges have a degree in early childhood education or a related field and all have experience working with 3-and 4-year-old children.
- The highest proportion of workshops were offered in the area of curriculum practice and the fewest addressed diversity issues.

Outreach and Partnerships

For-Credit Partnerships

- 11 of the 2- and 4-year colleges were in partnerships with other agencies. Of these partnerships, 8 community colleges have articulation agreements with 4-year universities enabling students to count some of their early childhood coursework towards P-3 certification.
- Half of the 4-year colleges and universities reported partnering with (9) districts and (2) R&Rs.
- 5 community colleges offer for-credit coursework at a local district or R&R.

Not for Credit Partnerships

- 2 universities reported partnering with other 4-year universities to provide conferences and workshops.
- 22 districts reported working with a local consortium to provide professional development for their preschool teachers.
- 11 school districts collaborated with other districts to provide professional development.

Recommendations

As the findings from this study attest there is a wide range of training and certification programs available in this state should a preschool teacher want to both obtain a teaching credential and improve their expertise. However, the two components of teacher education, teacher preparation and professional development, continue to work primarily in isolation from one another and as a consequence, opportunities for effective and long lasting improvement in educational practice are being minimized. With the aim of forging further partnerships and linkages within and across programs and agencies we make the following recommendations:

Teacher Preparation Programs

- Two- and four-year colleges should create an agreed upon standard for student: faculty ratios to ensure adequate advisement about programs and coursework.
- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate

curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, 2- and 4-year colleges should engage in a self study or audit of the content of coursework.

- Two- and four-year colleges should examine the qualifications and expertise of faculty regarding diversity issues and take steps to ensure those faculties improve their knowledge and skills in these areas.
- The Commission on Higher Education should bring together the Deans of the 2- and 4-year colleges on a regular basis to discuss variability within the current system, and to develop agreed upon principles for hiring and training of faculty and staffing programs.

Ongoing Professional Development

- The state Department of Education (DOE) should assess whether districts have the administrative resources that they need to ensure that their preschool teachers receive appropriate training opportunities.
- The state DOE should require non-Abbott ECPA districts to follow the same guidelines for professional development as Abbott districts and should provide adequate resources to do so.
- School districts, R&Rs, and community colleges should build more effective partnerships to increase collaboration and reduce duplication in providing ongoing professional development to preschool teachers.

Towards Creating a Coordinated System

While there are valuable partnerships occurring across institutions, for the most part they appear to be ad hoc and individually created leaving those teaching in smaller districts and further from colleges and universities at a disadvantage. To ensure consistency and continuity in the development of the preschool teacher workforce, New Jersey must now target its financial and human resources to the development of a more coordinated system of teacher preparation and professional development. Currently there is no committee or agency charged with the responsibility of overseeing both professional development and teacher education for a specific sector. This coordination is particularly critical in preschool education because the workforce is extraordinarily diverse in qualifications, knowledge, and level of experience and is located in a range of settings that have historically been regulated differently. It is therefore recommended that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education.

Toward a Unified System of Early Childhood Teacher Education and Professional Development: Conversations with Stakeholders

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin

The report examines the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the creation of a new system of teacher preparation and professional development in New Jersey. The questions guiding this study were: 1) What do various stakeholders believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do, 2) What kinds of experiences do they believe contribute to this development, 3) What are the components of an effective system of teacher education and professional development and, 4) What do various stakeholders perceive to be the barriers and supports in the current system that influence the provision of quality teacher preparation and development experiences for preschool teachers?

Thirty-eight individuals participated in eight focus group interviews. The sample included 16 preschool teachers, 11 professional development providers or administrators, 5 teacher educators from 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, and 6 state policymakers. The interview protocols concentrated on four main topics: definitions of the knowledge, dispositions, and skills preschool teachers need to have, the content of current preparation and professional development experiences and perceived gaps in current offerings, barriers and supports in the current system, and ideas about improving the current system.

Summary of the Findings

Two themes emerged from the analysis of the focus group transcripts. The first theme addresses the relationship between the discourse of research concerning the knowledge base required by preschool teachers and what those in the field believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do. The second theme is concerned with the overall system of early childhood teacher development and examines some of the barriers and supports currently in place that hinder or aid the development of such a system in New Jersey.

Content and Form of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Similar to current research and literature on teacher preparation there is agreement that preschool teachers need a foundation in child development coupled with knowledge of various teaching strategies that will enable them to enact developmentally appropriate practices. Echoing the literature that teacher development opportunities must be linked to practice and engage teachers in collaborative inquiry (Lieberman & Miller, 2001), teachers and those who educate them also repeatedly talked about on-site learning experiences in which teachers educate one another. In order to optimize teacher learning, stakeholders agreed that training should be individualized and coordinated so that teachers build on their learning experiences. Alongside these points of agreement were three areas where stakeholders diverged in their views about the content and delivery of teacher education and training opportunities.

First, missing from these conversations is attention to the kinds of knowledge and skills that

national standards say teachers need to be able to work with students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. To be sure several teachers and teacher educators spoke about teachers having to know how to support families and children who often live in difficult circumstances but diversity as one of the everyday aspects of teaching no matter the context was not as prevalent in these conversations. Moreover, aside from literacy, there was also little attention given to the kinds of domain specific knowledge being called for in educational policies. While respondents mentioned math and science, there were no substantive ideas about how teachers could be prepared to teach these subjects. These responses suggest that there is currently a gap between what the current policy context is expecting preschool teachers to know and be able to do and the traditional practice of teacher education and professional development.

A second point of divergence is whether everything a teacher needs to be able to do can be taught or whether it also involves having a set of dispositions or traits that make one more suited to teaching. As administrators and professional development providers raised this issue more than anyone else, their concerns may reflect the difficulties in finding teaching staff that can connect with children on an emotional level. Yet, in identifying that preschool teachers need to be able to “love” children, they potentially also draw attention to the marginalization of the socio-emotional aspects of teaching in current policy discussions of early childhood. When coupled with administrators views that teachers also need to possess the communication and interpersonal skills to be able to work effectively with other adults, these responses suggest that some space must be made in the curriculum for these aspects of teaching in addition to the focus on diversity issues, foundational knowledge, and curriculum content.

A third tension arose between the relative value of onsite learning to teach experiences and classroom based coursework and workshops. While workshops and coursework were not discussed negatively, what was striking was that they were barely discussed at all. When asked what types of experiences are needed to develop high quality preschool teachers, participants from all stakeholder groups identified onsite learning that took place directly in preschool classrooms. However, despite the inclusion of mentors and master teachers in the new system, the bulk of teacher education and professional development still takes place in workshops and college classes.

The System of Preschool Teacher Development

Participants were aware and proud of the fact that a system of preschool preparation and professional development had been created in New Jersey in a relatively short period of time. It was recognized that this system was both preparing large numbers of certified teachers and providing those teachers with an astounding amount of professional development. Stakeholders identified pockets of strength at all levels of the system, including the leadership of Ellen Frede at the state level, the implementation of special programs to support non-traditional students at the colleges and universities, and the time and resources put aside for professional development in the districts and childcare centers. Many participants, whether they were teachers, professional development providers, directors, teacher educators or policy makers recognized that the programs that had been created were improving the quality of early childhood teaching in New Jersey and were therefore benefiting some of the state’s poorest children.

While these and other successes produced a certain amount of optimism among participants, stakeholders also identified multiple barriers to the creation of a high quality system of early childhood teacher education. These barriers fell into three categories: a bureaucracy that seemed to hinder rather than support teachers upgrading their skills and credentials, insufficient standards for what constituted a high quality preschool teacher, and a lack of coordination and partnerships between and across agencies.

There was general concern about the bureaucratic aspects of the system of early childhood teacher education and professional development. As one community college teacher educator remarked, “Systems have a very hard time accommodating.” Although the system she is referring to is only a few years old, some stakeholders believed that it had already taken on some of the negative aspects of an established bureaucracy and that this was a barrier to quality. While the teachers and administrators gave personal accountings of problems with the bureaucracy, the participants in the policymakers’ focus group drew attention to the lack of oversight and central organization that they believed plagued the system. This lack of a centralized leadership may be one factor in producing a system that did not provide sufficient access to information, had substantial variability in quality, and a high level of disorganization.

A second barrier identified by stakeholders, was the perceived variability in the quality of teacher preparation programs and training opportunities. Stakeholders argued for the need to maintain high expectations or standards for the field to ensure that every classroom was staffed by a high quality teacher. While standards were a concern at district and state levels, both policymakers and higher education professors stressed the need for high academic expectations at the colleges and universities. To ensure higher expectations meant that faculty and their institutions would have to make changes and would have to be more stringent about who was accepted into their programs and what was required of them for certification and graduation. For other teacher educators, a key way to begin improving the system was not to only raise the standards about who and who does not enter and succeed in teacher preparation programs but to also create capacity in the system to support these teachers through an increase in the numbers of leaders who are early childhood specialists. As one 4-year college participant so aptly puts it, “We’re not building leaders. We’re not building educators. We’re not building the capacity.” Policy makers, on the other hand, stressed the need to regulate higher education by requiring certification programs to be nationally accredited and was putting more stringent codes in place that require programs to include particular topics as part of their coursework.

The final barrier to creating a high quality workforce is the lack of partnerships occurring between universities and school districts, and between 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, as well as the various agencies and individuals providing professional development. Every stakeholder was able to identify areas where the system or “non-system” as it has been called could be improved through partnerships, and continuity within and across components of the system. With preschool teacher preparation and professional development at the forefront of current educational discourse, these responses highlight the future directions for those of us responsible for educating teachers.

Recommendations

- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, institutions of higher education should:
 - Develop a communication campaign to disseminate information about the knowledge base required to be an effective preschool teacher.
 - Engage in a self-study or audit of the content of coursework by bringing teacher educators together along with the syllabi for their courses to discuss how they approach the teaching of particular topics and the strategies they use to assist students with difficult content.
 - Examine exemplary program in other states to elicit ideas and new perspectives.

- In response to the concerns raised by all stakeholders that there is a lack of expertise at all levels of the current system it is recommended that some effort be made to recruit and expand the numbers of qualified and experienced early childhood leaders in the state. To enact this recommendation will require not only providing enough fiscal support to the hiring of new faculty and early childhood specialists, but will also necessitate turning our attention towards the creation of new programs of training in early childhood leadership where currently only certification or doctoral programs exist.

- To ensure that collaborations between various levels of the system do not occur by happenstance or through individualized action alone we recommend that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education. This agency would:
 - Promote and support partnerships between agencies at different levels of the system.
 - Serve as a clearinghouse for partnerships and collaborations between and across levels of the professional development and teacher preparation system.
 - Ensure that the system as a whole is developing programs and services that meet the needs of the preschool workforce and the children that they serve.

Finding the Gaps, Creating Opportunities: Research to Inform the Implementation of a
Coordinated System of Professional Development and Teacher Preparation

Sharon Ryan and Carrie Lobman

Graduate School of Education
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Financial Support for this study was provided by the Foundation for Child Development
and the Carnegie Corporation of New York

Getting Qualified: A Report on the Efforts of Preschool Teachers in New Jersey's *Abbott* Districts to Improve their Qualifications

Sharon Ryan and Debra J. Ackerman

This report describes the demographics, salaries, and work experience of teachers who work in *Abbott* preschools throughout New Jersey, as well as their efforts to obtain a BA and P-3 certification by the Court's 2004 deadline. The 689 teachers who participated in this study not only work in all 30 *Abbott* districts, but are affiliated with public schools, Head Starts, and community-based programs, as well. Although our response rate varied among districts and within each of these three auspices, our final sample included 270 public school teachers (39%), 94 Head Start teachers (14%), and 325 community-based teachers (47%).

The study itself was conducted in 2002-2003 and utilized a telephone interview protocol written by the authors. The protocol examined two key areas related to implementation of high quality preschool at the classroom level. The first area of the protocol queried participants regarding their background information and work experience and history. The second area examined the teacher credentials of our sample, and sought to gain input not only on the numbers of teachers working towards any increased qualification—including a P-3 certification—but anticipated completion dates, as well. Because many preschool teachers are also non-traditional students, the protocol elicited information on the reasons teachers are seeking to improve their qualifications and the supports and barriers that may be affecting their current educational endeavors.

Results

To ensure that accurate predictions could be made, the sample was weighted to represent the total 2003-2004 teaching population of 2825 teachers in the *Abbott* districts based on data provided by the New Jersey Department of Education. The results, then, are reported as percentages of this entire population.

Demographics:

- The average age of *Abbott* preschool teachers is 38 years old and 96% are female.
- 21.1% of the *Abbott* teaching population are from countries other than the United States, and most of these teachers work in either community-based settings or Head Start programs.
- Almost half of all *Abbott* preschool teachers are White (43.6%), 32.5% are African-American, and 5.8% are Hispanic. A small proportion of teachers in the *Abbott* districts are from Asian-American or Native American backgrounds.
- Race/ethnicity of the teaching population varies across program type, with the majority of public school teachers (69.6%) being White, and less than 25% being either African-American or Hispanic.
- In the community-based settings, 39.2% of teachers are African-American, 33.4% are White, and 19.1% are Hispanic.
- In Head Start programs, just over half of teachers are African-American (50.7%), 21% are Hispanic, and 17.5% are White.

Salaries/Experience:

- Preschool teachers in the *Abbott* districts receive an average salary of \$37,050, but the average salary of teachers in public schools is \$41,834, Head Starts \$34,200, and community-based settings \$34,440.
- 60% of the *Abbott* teaching population have worked in the classroom for 5 years or more.

Meeting the 2004 *Abbott* Mandate:

- 49.2% of the teaching population is certified and therefore already meets the mandate. In addition 32.9% of teachers who are enrolled in coursework anticipate finishing their degree requirements by the court-imposed deadline.
- Another 8% of teachers may potentially meet the mandate. Teachers within this group already have attained a BA, and while not enrolled in a credentialing program at the time of this study, could have enrolled since then and completed their credentialing coursework.
- 6.9% of *Abbott* preschool teachers who are also undertaking P-3 related coursework will not meet the deadline of September 2004. The majority of these teachers, however, have indicated that they will be able to complete their course requirements within 2 years or by September 2006.
- 2.7% of the teaching population is not attempting to meet the mandate at all. The teachers within this group do not have a Bachelor's degree and are not enrolled in any kind of coursework that may lead to an early childhood teaching credential.
- 33% of the teachers who are enrolled in some kind of teacher preparation program indicated that they intend to leave their positions once they became certified. 80% of these teachers are working in community-based or Head Start preschool settings, and when asked the job they wanted instead, the majority indicated that they wanted to be a teacher in a public school setting.

Recommendations

- The deadline to become certified should be extended until September 2006 for those teachers who are currently enrolled in P-3 related coursework and can demonstrate that they will be able to meet this new deadline.
- Specific incentives need to be developed to convince teachers in community-based settings to remain within their current settings once they obtain their certification. This is particularly important given that the teachers in Head Start and community-based settings more closely reflect the demographics of students in the *Abbott* districts than do teachers in public schools.
- Attention also needs to be paid to how teachers who already have a Bachelors degree but are not enrolled in any certification program might be supported to undertake an alternate route to certification.
- The variation between districts in terms of teachers' efforts and abilities to meet the mandate would suggest that some districts have been more successful in recruiting and/or supporting their preschool teachers. It would seem worthwhile to initiate some kind of investigation to identify the common strategies employed by these districts to ensure that teachers have been able to meet the mandate on time.

* Full version of report is available at <http://nieer.org>

Educating Preschool Teachers: Mapping the Teacher Preparation and Professional Development System in New Jersey

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin, & Debra J. Ackerman

This report maps the system of preschool teacher preparation and professional development in the state of New Jersey. The main purposes of this study were to: 1.) examine the capacity of the system to meet the ongoing demand for preschool teachers, 2.) to document the content of teacher preparation programs and professional development workshops, and 3.) to identify the gaps that exist between what standards recommend preschool teachers need to know and be able to do and the programs available to teachers in New Jersey.

One hundred and sixteen representatives from the 140 agencies and institutions that provide preschool teacher training were included in this study. The sample consisted of 12 representatives from four-year colleges, 17 representatives from community colleges, 29 representatives from Abbott districts, 42 representatives from non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts, and 17 representatives from resource and referral agencies. The interview protocol was conducted in 2003-2004. Interview protocols focused on the content of training offered, the current capacity of institutions, and outreach and partnerships that had been developed with other agencies.

Findings

Capacity and Content of Four-Year Colleges and Universities:

- Approximately 2,600 students enrolled in approved P-3 certification programs. 58% of these students are enrolled in traditional 4-year undergraduate certification programs, 24% are in an approved alternate route program, and the remaining students are enrolled in various post-baccalaureate programs including endorsement programs.
- 162 faculty members teach in early childhood programs in these universities- 75 are full-time faculty (half of which are tenured) and 87 are part-time and adjunct faculty.
- The mean ratio of full-time faculty to student is 1:43, with variation across institutions from 1:2 to 1:156.
- 61 of the full-time faculty members are white, 8 are African-American, five are Asian-American and one is Latina. Five of the 12 schools have entirely white early childhood faculty.
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in early childhood or related field (child development or another degree that specifically covers children younger than kindergarten age) and 85% have had direct employment experience with three and four year olds.
- Students currently in P-3 preparation programs at 2- or 4-year colleges are more likely to receive stand alone coursework in child development, curriculum, and literacy than in other content areas or diversity issues.
 - Almost 90% of programs devote an entire class to curriculum development.
 - Almost 80% of the programs offer literacy as a stand alone class, while some do not include social studies, math, music and art in any of the coursework.
 - 38% of the programs require student to take an entire class on working with

children with special needs, while three programs do not address this topic at all.

- Students in alternate route programs are less likely to receive coursework in the areas of math ($p < .05$), play ($p < .05$), and early childhood assessment methods ($p < .05$).

Capacity and Content at Two-Year Community Colleges

- Approximately 3,200 students were enrolled early childhood programs in community colleges.
- There are 105 early childhood faculty members- 34 full-time (60% tenured) and 71 part-time faculty.
- Mean ratio of students to faculty is 1:35, varying from 1:11 to 1:225.
- 81 faculty are White, 11 are African American, three are Latina, and 1 is Asian/Pacific Islander, 9 are unknown.
- Half of the schools (16 of 17 responded to this question) have all-White faculties
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in Early Childhood or a related field and 69% have experience working with children ages 3-4 years.
- Between 80 and 90% offer philosophical foundations, curriculum development, play, DAP, and classroom management as part or all of a required class.
- Literacy, art, and music/movement are all offered as a stand-alone class in over 50% of the community colleges.
- Over 50% of the colleges have an entire course devoted to working with young children with special needs, while only 12% devote a full class to working with children from diverse cultures and 6% devote a full class to issues of ELL.
- Community colleges that offer an Associates of Applied Science in early childhood (a non-transferable degree) are more likely to offer coursework in the areas of curriculum development, literacy, math, science, art, foundations and working with children with special needs than were schools with just an AA degree.

Capacity and Content of Agencies that Provide Professional Development

Abbott and non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts

- The 71 districts participating in this study offered a total of 1,127 workshops with more than 12,500 teachers attending during the 2003-2004.
- 50% of workshop trainers have a degree specializing in early childhood or a related field and 70% have had direct employment experience working with 3- and 4-year-old children.
- 40% of workshops offered by districts were related to early childhood curriculum while only 10% addressed diversity topics including multiculturalism, ELL, and working with children with special needs.
- Abbott districts are more likely than non-Abbott ECPA districts (significant at the $p < .05$ level) to offer workshops in assessment, setting up the classroom environment, child development, behavior management, DAP, working with children with special needs, and health and safety issues.

Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R)

- The 17 R&Rs offered 984 workshops this past year with a total of 3970 participants.
- Of the 159 workshop instructors employed at R&Rs, 64% have a degree in early childhood

or a related field and 78% had experience working with 3-and 4-year-olds.

- 100% of R&Rs offer training in behavior management, curriculum, and working with families and over 80% offer training in diversity, working with children with special needs.

Community Colleges

- 8 of the 17 community colleges offer not-for-credit workshops and trainings for preschool teachers.
- 115 workshops were offered at these community colleges last year with a total of 1,480 people attending.
- 90% of the 69 workshop instructors at community colleges have a degree in early childhood education or a related field and all have experience working with 3-and 4-year-old children.
- The highest proportion of workshops were offered in the area of curriculum practice and the fewest addressed diversity issues.

Outreach and Partnerships

For-Credit Partnerships

- 11 of the 2- and 4-year colleges were in partnerships with other agencies. Of these partnerships, 8 community colleges have articulation agreements with 4-year universities enabling students to count some of their early childhood coursework towards P-3 certification.
- Half of the 4-year colleges and universities reported partnering with (9) districts and (2) R&Rs.
- 5 community colleges offer for-credit coursework at a local district or R&R.

Not for Credit Partnerships

- 2 universities reported partnering with other 4-year universities to provide conferences and workshops.
- 22 districts reported working with a local consortium to provide professional development for their preschool teachers.
- 11 school districts collaborated with other districts to provide professional development.

Recommendations

As the findings from this study attest there is a wide range of training and certification programs available in this state should a preschool teacher want to both obtain a teaching credential and improve their expertise. However, the two components of teacher education, teacher preparation and professional development, continue to work primarily in isolation from one another and as a consequence, opportunities for effective and long lasting improvement in educational practice are being minimized. With the aim of forging further partnerships and linkages within and across programs and agencies we make the following recommendations:

Teacher Preparation Programs

- Two- and four-year colleges should create an agreed upon standard for student: faculty ratios to ensure adequate advisement about programs and coursework.
- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate

curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, 2- and 4-year colleges should engage in a self study or audit of the content of coursework.

- Two- and four-year colleges should examine the qualifications and expertise of faculty regarding diversity issues and take steps to ensure those faculties improve their knowledge and skills in these areas.
- The Commission on Higher Education should bring together the Deans of the 2- and 4-year colleges on a regular basis to discuss variability within the current system, and to develop agreed upon principles for hiring and training of faculty and staffing programs.

Ongoing Professional Development

- The state Department of Education (DOE) should assess whether districts have the administrative resources that they need to ensure that their preschool teachers receive appropriate training opportunities.
- The state DOE should require non-Abbott ECPA districts to follow the same guidelines for professional development as Abbott districts and should provide adequate resources to do so.
- School districts, R&Rs, and community colleges should build more effective partnerships to increase collaboration and reduce duplication in providing ongoing professional development to preschool teachers.

Towards Creating a Coordinated System

While there are valuable partnerships occurring across institutions, for the most part they appear to be ad hoc and individually created leaving those teaching in smaller districts and further from colleges and universities at a disadvantage. To ensure consistency and continuity in the development of the preschool teacher workforce, New Jersey must now target its financial and human resources to the development of a more coordinated system of teacher preparation and professional development. Currently there is no committee or agency charged with the responsibility of overseeing both professional development and teacher education for a specific sector. This coordination is particularly critical in preschool education because the workforce is extraordinarily diverse in qualifications, knowledge, and level of experience and is located in a range of settings that have historically been regulated differently. It is therefore recommended that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education.

Toward a Unified System of Early Childhood Teacher Education and Professional Development: Conversations with Stakeholders

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin

The report examines the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the creation of a new system of teacher preparation and professional development in New Jersey. The questions guiding this study were: 1) What do various stakeholders believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do, 2) What kinds of experiences do they believe contribute to this development, 3) What are the components of an effective system of teacher education and professional development and, 4) What do various stakeholders perceive to be the barriers and supports in the current system that influence the provision of quality teacher preparation and development experiences for preschool teachers?

Thirty-eight individuals participated in eight focus group interviews. The sample included 16 preschool teachers, 11 professional development providers or administrators, 5 teacher educators from 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, and 6 state policymakers. The interview protocols concentrated on four main topics: definitions of the knowledge, dispositions, and skills preschool teachers need to have, the content of current preparation and professional development experiences and perceived gaps in current offerings, barriers and supports in the current system, and ideas about improving the current system.

Summary of the Findings

Two themes emerged from the analysis of the focus group transcripts. The first theme addresses the relationship between the discourse of research concerning the knowledge base required by preschool teachers and what those in the field believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do. The second theme is concerned with the overall system of early childhood teacher development and examines some of the barriers and supports currently in place that hinder or aid the development of such a system in New Jersey.

Content and Form of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Similar to current research and literature on teacher preparation there is agreement that preschool teachers need a foundation in child development coupled with knowledge of various teaching strategies that will enable them to enact developmentally appropriate practices. Echoing the literature that teacher development opportunities must be linked to practice and engage teachers in collaborative inquiry (Lieberman & Miller, 2001), teachers and those who educate them also repeatedly talked about on-site learning experiences in which teachers educate one another. In order to optimize teacher learning, stakeholders agreed that training should be individualized and coordinated so that teachers build on their learning experiences. Alongside these points of agreement were three areas where stakeholders diverged in their views about the content and delivery of teacher education and training opportunities.

First, missing from these conversations is attention to the kinds of knowledge and skills that

national standards say teachers need to be able to work with students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. To be sure several teachers and teacher educators spoke about teachers having to know how to support families and children who often live in difficult circumstances but diversity as one of the everyday aspects of teaching no matter the context was not as prevalent in these conversations. Moreover, aside from literacy, there was also little attention given to the kinds of domain specific knowledge being called for in educational policies. While respondents mentioned math and science, there were no substantive ideas about how teachers could be prepared to teach these subjects. These responses suggest that there is currently a gap between what the current policy context is expecting preschool teachers to know and be able to do and the traditional practice of teacher education and professional development.

A second point of divergence is whether everything a teacher needs to be able to do can be taught or whether it also involves having a set of dispositions or traits that make one more suited to teaching. As administrators and professional development providers raised this issue more than anyone else, their concerns may reflect the difficulties in finding teaching staff that can connect with children on an emotional level. Yet, in identifying that preschool teachers need to be able to “love” children, they potentially also draw attention to the marginalization of the socio-emotional aspects of teaching in current policy discussions of early childhood. When coupled with administrators views that teachers also need to possess the communication and interpersonal skills to be able to work effectively with other adults, these responses suggest that some space must be made in the curriculum for these aspects of teaching in addition to the focus on diversity issues, foundational knowledge, and curriculum content.

A third tension arose between the relative value of onsite learning to teach experiences and classroom based coursework and workshops. While workshops and coursework were not discussed negatively, what was striking was that they were barely discussed at all. When asked what types of experiences are needed to develop high quality preschool teachers, participants from all stakeholder groups identified onsite learning that took place directly in preschool classrooms. However, despite the inclusion of mentors and master teachers in the new system, the bulk of teacher education and professional development still takes place in workshops and college classes.

The System of Preschool Teacher Development

Participants were aware and proud of the fact that a system of preschool preparation and professional development had been created in New Jersey in a relatively short period of time. It was recognized that this system was both preparing large numbers of certified teachers and providing those teachers with an astounding amount of professional development. Stakeholders identified pockets of strength at all levels of the system, including the leadership of Ellen Frede at the state level, the implementation of special programs to support non-traditional students at the colleges and universities, and the time and resources put aside for professional development in the districts and childcare centers. Many participants, whether they were teachers, professional development providers, directors, teacher educators or policy makers recognized that the programs that had been created were improving the quality of early childhood teaching in New Jersey and were therefore benefiting some of the state’s poorest children.

While these and other successes produced a certain amount of optimism among participants, stakeholders also identified multiple barriers to the creation of a high quality system of early childhood teacher education. These barriers fell into three categories: a bureaucracy that seemed to hinder rather than support teachers upgrading their skills and credentials, insufficient standards for what constituted a high quality preschool teacher, and a lack of coordination and partnerships between and across agencies.

There was general concern about the bureaucratic aspects of the system of early childhood teacher education and professional development. As one community college teacher educator remarked, “Systems have a very hard time accommodating.” Although the system she is referring to is only a few years old, some stakeholders believed that it had already taken on some of the negative aspects of an established bureaucracy and that this was a barrier to quality. While the teachers and administrators gave personal accountings of problems with the bureaucracy, the participants in the policymakers’ focus group drew attention to the lack of oversight and central organization that they believed plagued the system. This lack of a centralized leadership may be one factor in producing a system that did not provide sufficient access to information, had substantial variability in quality, and a high level of disorganization.

A second barrier identified by stakeholders, was the perceived variability in the quality of teacher preparation programs and training opportunities. Stakeholders argued for the need to maintain high expectations or standards for the field to ensure that every classroom was staffed by a high quality teacher. While standards were a concern at district and state levels, both policymakers and higher education professors stressed the need for high academic expectations at the colleges and universities. To ensure higher expectations meant that faculty and their institutions would have to make changes and would have to be more stringent about who was accepted into their programs and what was required of them for certification and graduation. For other teacher educators, a key way to begin improving the system was not to only raise the standards about who and who does not enter and succeed in teacher preparation programs but to also create capacity in the system to support these teachers through an increase in the numbers of leaders who are early childhood specialists. As one 4-year college participant so aptly puts it, “We’re not building leaders. We’re not building educators. We’re not building the capacity.” Policy makers, on the other hand, stressed the need to regulate higher education by requiring certification programs to be nationally accredited and was putting more stringent codes in place that require programs to include particular topics as part of their coursework.

The final barrier to creating a high quality workforce is the lack of partnerships occurring between universities and school districts, and between 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, as well as the various agencies and individuals providing professional development. Every stakeholder was able to identify areas where the system or “non-system” as it has been called could be improved through partnerships, and continuity within and across components of the system. With preschool teacher preparation and professional development at the forefront of current educational discourse, these responses highlight the future directions for those of us responsible for educating teachers.

Recommendations

- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, institutions of higher education should:
 - Develop a communication campaign to disseminate information about the knowledge base required to be an effective preschool teacher.
 - Engage in a self-study or audit of the content of coursework by bringing teacher educators together along with the syllabi for their courses to discuss how they approach the teaching of particular topics and the strategies they use to assist students with difficult content.
 - Examine exemplary program in other states to elicit ideas and new perspectives.

- In response to the concerns raised by all stakeholders that there is a lack of expertise at all levels of the current system it is recommended that some effort be made to recruit and expand the numbers of qualified and experienced early childhood leaders in the state. To enact this recommendation will require not only providing enough fiscal support to the hiring of new faculty and early childhood specialists, but will also necessitate turning our attention towards the creation of new programs of training in early childhood leadership where currently only certification or doctoral programs exist.

- To ensure that collaborations between various levels of the system do not occur by happenstance or through individualized action alone we recommend that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education. This agency would:
 - Promote and support partnerships between agencies at different levels of the system.
 - Serve as a clearinghouse for partnerships and collaborations between and across levels of the professional development and teacher preparation system.
 - Ensure that the system as a whole is developing programs and services that meet the needs of the preschool workforce and the children that they serve.

Finding the Gaps, Creating Opportunities: Research to Inform the Implementation of a
Coordinated System of Professional Development and Teacher Preparation

Sharon Ryan and Carrie Lobman

Graduate School of Education
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Financial Support for this study was provided by the Foundation for Child Development
and the Carnegie Corporation of New York

Getting Qualified: A Report on the Efforts of Preschool Teachers in New Jersey's *Abbott* Districts to Improve their Qualifications

Sharon Ryan and Debra J. Ackerman

This report describes the demographics, salaries, and work experience of teachers who work in *Abbott* preschools throughout New Jersey, as well as their efforts to obtain a BA and P-3 certification by the Court's 2004 deadline. The 689 teachers who participated in this study not only work in all 30 *Abbott* districts, but are affiliated with public schools, Head Starts, and community-based programs, as well. Although our response rate varied among districts and within each of these three auspices, our final sample included 270 public school teachers (39%), 94 Head Start teachers (14%), and 325 community-based teachers (47%).

The study itself was conducted in 2002-2003 and utilized a telephone interview protocol written by the authors. The protocol examined two key areas related to implementation of high quality preschool at the classroom level. The first area of the protocol queried participants regarding their background information and work experience and history. The second area examined the teacher credentials of our sample, and sought to gain input not only on the numbers of teachers working towards any increased qualification—including a P-3 certification—but anticipated completion dates, as well. Because many preschool teachers are also non-traditional students, the protocol elicited information on the reasons teachers are seeking to improve their qualifications and the supports and barriers that may be affecting their current educational endeavors.

Results

To ensure that accurate predictions could be made, the sample was weighted to represent the total 2003-2004 teaching population of 2825 teachers in the *Abbott* districts based on data provided by the New Jersey Department of Education. The results, then, are reported as percentages of this entire population.

Demographics:

- The average age of *Abbott* preschool teachers is 38 years old and 96% are female.
- 21.1% of the *Abbott* teaching population are from countries other than the United States, and most of these teachers work in either community-based settings or Head Start programs.
- Almost half of all *Abbott* preschool teachers are White (43.6%), 32.5% are African-American, and 5.8% are Hispanic. A small proportion of teachers in the *Abbott* districts are from Asian-American or Native American backgrounds.
- Race/ethnicity of the teaching population varies across program type, with the majority of public school teachers (69.6%) being White, and less than 25% being either African-American or Hispanic.
- In the community-based settings, 39.2% of teachers are African-American, 33.4% are White, and 19.1% are Hispanic.
- In Head Start programs, just over half of teachers are African-American (50.7%), 21% are Hispanic, and 17.5% are White.

Salaries/Experience:

- Preschool teachers in the *Abbott* districts receive an average salary of \$37,050, but the average salary of teachers in public schools is \$41,834, Head Starts \$34,200, and community-based settings \$34,440.
- 60% of the *Abbott* teaching population have worked in the classroom for 5 years or more.

Meeting the 2004 *Abbott* Mandate:

- 49.2% of the teaching population is certified and therefore already meets the mandate. In addition 32.9% of teachers who are enrolled in coursework anticipate finishing their degree requirements by the court-imposed deadline.
- Another 8% of teachers may potentially meet the mandate. Teachers within this group already have attained a BA, and while not enrolled in a credentialing program at the time of this study, could have enrolled since then and completed their credentialing coursework.
- 6.9% of *Abbott* preschool teachers who are also undertaking P-3 related coursework will not meet the deadline of September 2004. The majority of these teachers, however, have indicated that they will be able to complete their course requirements within 2 years or by September 2006.
- 2.7% of the teaching population is not attempting to meet the mandate at all. The teachers within this group do not have a Bachelor's degree and are not enrolled in any kind of coursework that may lead to an early childhood teaching credential.
- 33% of the teachers who are enrolled in some kind of teacher preparation program indicated that they intend to leave their positions once they became certified. 80% of these teachers are working in community-based or Head Start preschool settings, and when asked the job they wanted instead, the majority indicated that they wanted to be a teacher in a public school setting.

Recommendations

- The deadline to become certified should be extended until September 2006 for those teachers who are currently enrolled in P-3 related coursework and can demonstrate that they will be able to meet this new deadline.
- Specific incentives need to be developed to convince teachers in community-based settings to remain within their current settings once they obtain their certification. This is particularly important given that the teachers in Head Start and community-based settings more closely reflect the demographics of students in the *Abbott* districts than do teacher in public schools.
- Attention also needs to be paid to how teachers who already have a Bachelors degree but are not enrolled in any certification program might be supported to undertake an alternate route to certification.
- The variation between districts in terms of teachers' efforts and abilities to meet the mandate would suggest that some districts have been more successful in recruiting and/or supporting their preschool teachers. It would seem worthwhile to initiate some kind of investigation to identify the common strategies employed by these districts to ensure that teachers have been able to meet the mandate on time.

* Full version of report is available at <http://nieer.org>

Educating Preschool Teachers: Mapping the Teacher Preparation and Professional Development System in New Jersey

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin, & Debra J. Ackerman

This report maps the system of preschool teacher preparation and professional development in the state of New Jersey. The main purposes of this study were to: 1.) examine the capacity of the system to meet the ongoing demand for preschool teachers, 2.) to document the content of teacher preparation programs and professional development workshops, and 3.) to identify the gaps that exist between what standards recommend preschool teachers need to know and be able to do and the programs available to teachers in New Jersey.

One hundred and sixteen representatives from the 140 agencies and institutions that provide preschool teacher training were included in this study. The sample consisted of 12 representatives from four-year colleges, 17 representatives from community colleges, 29 representatives from Abbott districts, 42 representatives from non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts, and 17 representatives from resource and referral agencies. The interview protocol was conducted in 2003-2004. Interview protocols focused on the content of training offered, the current capacity of institutions, and outreach and partnerships that had been developed with other agencies.

Findings

Capacity and Content of Four-Year Colleges and Universities:

- Approximately 2,600 students enrolled in approved P-3 certification programs. 58% of these students are enrolled in traditional 4-year undergraduate certification programs, 24% are in an approved alternate route program, and the remaining students are enrolled in various post-baccalaureate programs including endorsement programs.
- 162 faculty members teach in early childhood programs in these universities- 75 are full-time faculty (half of which are tenured) and 87 are part-time and adjunct faculty.
- The mean ratio of full-time faculty to student is 1:43, with variation across institutions from 1:2 to 1:156.
- 61 of the full-time faculty members are white, 8 are African-American, five are Asian-American and one is Latina. Five of the 12 schools have entirely white early childhood faculty.
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in early childhood or related field (child development or another degree that specifically covers children younger than kindergarten age) and 85% have had direct employment experience with three and four year olds.
- Students currently in P-3 preparation programs at 2- or 4-year colleges are more likely to receive stand alone coursework in child development, curriculum, and literacy than in other content areas or diversity issues.
 - Almost 90% of programs devote an entire class to curriculum development.
 - Almost 80% of the programs offer literacy as a stand alone class, while some do not include social studies, math, music and art in any of the coursework.
 - 38% of the programs require student to take an entire class on working with

children with special needs, while three programs do not address this topic at all.

- Students in alternate route programs are less likely to receive coursework in the areas of math ($p < .05$), play ($p < .05$), and early childhood assessment methods ($p < .05$).

Capacity and Content at Two-Year Community Colleges

- Approximately 3,200 students were enrolled early childhood programs in community colleges.
- There are 105 early childhood faculty members- 34 full-time (60% tenured) and 71 part-time faculty.
- Mean ratio of students to faculty is 1:35, varying from 1:11 to 1:225.
- 81 faculty are White, 11 are African American, three are Latina, and 1 is Asian/Pacific Islander, 9 are unknown.
- Half of the schools (16 of 17 responded to this question) have all-White faculties
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in Early Childhood or a related field and 69% have experience working with children ages 3-4 years.
- Between 80 and 90% offer philosophical foundations, curriculum development, play, DAP, and classroom management as part or all of a required class.
- Literacy, art, and music/movement are all offered as a stand-alone class in over 50% of the community colleges.
- Over 50% of the colleges have an entire course devoted to working with young children with special needs, while only 12% devote a full class to working with children from diverse cultures and 6% devote a full class to issues of ELL.
- Community colleges that offer an Associates of Applied Science in early childhood (a non-transferable degree) are more likely to offer coursework in the areas of curriculum development, literacy, math, science, art, foundations and working with children with special needs than were schools with just an AA degree.

Capacity and Content of Agencies that Provide Professional Development

Abbott and non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts

- The 71 districts participating in this study offered a total of 1,127 workshops with more than 12,500 teachers attending during the 2003-2004.
- 50% of workshop trainers have a degree specializing in early childhood or a related field and 70% have had direct employment experience working with 3- and 4-year-old children.
- 40% of workshops offered by districts were related to early childhood curriculum while only 10% addressed diversity topics including multiculturalism, ELL, and working with children with special needs.
- Abbott districts are more likely than non-Abbott ECPA districts (significant at the $p < .05$ level) to offer workshops in assessment, setting up the classroom environment, child development, behavior management, DAP, working with children with special needs, and health and safety issues.

Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R)

- The 17 R&Rs offered 984 workshops this past year with a total of 3970 participants.
- Of the 159 workshop instructors employed at R&Rs, 64% have a degree in early childhood

or a related field and 78% had experience working with 3-and 4-year-olds.

- 100% of R&Rs offer training in behavior management, curriculum, and working with families and over 80% offer training in diversity, working with children with special needs.

Community Colleges

- 8 of the 17 community colleges offer not-for-credit workshops and trainings for preschool teachers.
- 115 workshops were offered at these community colleges last year with a total of 1,480 people attending.
- 90% of the 69 workshop instructors at community colleges have a degree in early childhood education or a related field and all have experience working with 3-and 4-year-old children.
- The highest proportion of workshops were offered in the area of curriculum practice and the fewest addressed diversity issues.

Outreach and Partnerships

For-Credit Partnerships

- 11 of the 2- and 4-year colleges were in partnerships with other agencies. Of these partnerships, 8 community colleges have articulation agreements with 4-year universities enabling students to count some of their early childhood coursework towards P-3 certification.
- Half of the 4-year colleges and universities reported partnering with (9) districts and (2) R&Rs.
- 5 community colleges offer for-credit coursework at a local district or R&R.

Not for Credit Partnerships

- 2 universities reported partnering with other 4-year universities to provide conferences and workshops.
- 22 districts reported working with a local consortium to provide professional development for their preschool teachers.
- 11 school districts collaborated with other districts to provide professional development.

Recommendations

As the findings from this study attest there is a wide range of training and certification programs available in this state should a preschool teacher want to both obtain a teaching credential and improve their expertise. However, the two components of teacher education, teacher preparation and professional development, continue to work primarily in isolation from one another and as a consequence, opportunities for effective and long lasting improvement in educational practice are being minimized. With the aim of forging further partnerships and linkages within and across programs and agencies we make the following recommendations:

Teacher Preparation Programs

- Two- and four-year colleges should create an agreed upon standard for student: faculty ratios to ensure adequate advisement about programs and coursework.
- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate

curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, 2- and 4-year colleges should engage in a self study or audit of the content of coursework.

- Two- and four-year colleges should examine the qualifications and expertise of faculty regarding diversity issues and take steps to ensure those faculties improve their knowledge and skills in these areas.
- The Commission on Higher Education should bring together the Deans of the 2- and 4-year colleges on a regular basis to discuss variability within the current system, and to develop agreed upon principles for hiring and training of faculty and staffing programs.

Ongoing Professional Development

- The state Department of Education (DOE) should assess whether districts have the administrative resources that they need to ensure that their preschool teachers receive appropriate training opportunities.
- The state DOE should require non-Abbott ECPA districts to follow the same guidelines for professional development as Abbott districts and should provide adequate resources to do so.
- School districts, R&Rs, and community colleges should build more effective partnerships to increase collaboration and reduce duplication in providing ongoing professional development to preschool teachers.

Towards Creating a Coordinated System

While there are valuable partnerships occurring across institutions, for the most part they appear to be ad hoc and individually created leaving those teaching in smaller districts and further from colleges and universities at a disadvantage. To ensure consistency and continuity in the development of the preschool teacher workforce, New Jersey must now target its financial and human resources to the development of a more coordinated system of teacher preparation and professional development. Currently there is no committee or agency charged with the responsibility of overseeing both professional development and teacher education for a specific sector. This coordination is particularly critical in preschool education because the workforce is extraordinarily diverse in qualifications, knowledge, and level of experience and is located in a range of settings that have historically been regulated differently. It is therefore recommended that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education.

Toward a Unified System of Early Childhood Teacher Education and Professional Development: Conversations with Stakeholders

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin

The report examines the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the creation of a new system of teacher preparation and professional development in New Jersey. The questions guiding this study were: 1) What do various stakeholders believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do, 2) What kinds of experiences do they believe contribute to this development, 3) What are the components of an effective system of teacher education and professional development and, 4) What do various stakeholders perceive to be the barriers and supports in the current system that influence the provision of quality teacher preparation and development experiences for preschool teachers?

Thirty-eight individuals participated in eight focus group interviews. The sample included 16 preschool teachers, 11 professional development providers or administrators, 5 teacher educators from 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, and 6 state policymakers. The interview protocols concentrated on four main topics: definitions of the knowledge, dispositions, and skills preschool teachers need to have, the content of current preparation and professional development experiences and perceived gaps in current offerings, barriers and supports in the current system, and ideas about improving the current system.

Summary of the Findings

Two themes emerged from the analysis of the focus group transcripts. The first theme addresses the relationship between the discourse of research concerning the knowledge base required by preschool teachers and what those in the field believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do. The second theme is concerned with the overall system of early childhood teacher development and examines some of the barriers and supports currently in place that hinder or aid the development of such a system in New Jersey.

Content and Form of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Similar to current research and literature on teacher preparation there is agreement that preschool teachers need a foundation in child development coupled with knowledge of various teaching strategies that will enable them to enact developmentally appropriate practices. Echoing the literature that teacher development opportunities must be linked to practice and engage teachers in collaborative inquiry (Lieberman & Miller, 2001), teachers and those who educate them also repeatedly talked about on-site learning experiences in which teachers educate one another. In order to optimize teacher learning, stakeholders agreed that training should be individualized and coordinated so that teachers build on their learning experiences. Alongside these points of agreement were three areas where stakeholders diverged in their views about the content and delivery of teacher education and training opportunities.

First, missing from these conversations is attention to the kinds of knowledge and skills that

national standards say teachers need to be able to work with students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. To be sure several teachers and teacher educators spoke about teachers having to know how to support families and children who often live in difficult circumstances but diversity as one of the everyday aspects of teaching no matter the context was not as prevalent in these conversations. Moreover, aside from literacy, there was also little attention given to the kinds of domain specific knowledge being called for in educational policies. While respondents mentioned math and science, there were no substantive ideas about how teachers could be prepared to teach these subjects. These responses suggest that there is currently a gap between what the current policy context is expecting preschool teachers to know and be able to do and the traditional practice of teacher education and professional development.

A second point of divergence is whether everything a teacher needs to be able to do can be taught or whether it also involves having a set of dispositions or traits that make one more suited to teaching. As administrators and professional development providers raised this issue more than anyone else, their concerns may reflect the difficulties in finding teaching staff that can connect with children on an emotional level. Yet, in identifying that preschool teachers need to be able to “love” children, they potentially also draw attention to the marginalization of the socio-emotional aspects of teaching in current policy discussions of early childhood. When coupled with administrators views that teachers also need to possess the communication and interpersonal skills to be able to work effectively with other adults, these responses suggest that some space must be made in the curriculum for these aspects of teaching in addition to the focus on diversity issues, foundational knowledge, and curriculum content.

A third tension arose between the relative value of onsite learning to teach experiences and classroom based coursework and workshops. While workshops and coursework were not discussed negatively, what was striking was that they were barely discussed at all. When asked what types of experiences are needed to develop high quality preschool teachers, participants from all stakeholder groups identified onsite learning that took place directly in preschool classrooms. However, despite the inclusion of mentors and master teachers in the new system, the bulk of teacher education and professional development still takes place in workshops and college classes.

The System of Preschool Teacher Development

Participants were aware and proud of the fact that a system of preschool preparation and professional development had been created in New Jersey in a relatively short period of time. It was recognized that this system was both preparing large numbers of certified teachers and providing those teachers with an astounding amount of professional development. Stakeholders identified pockets of strength at all levels of the system, including the leadership of Ellen Frede at the state level, the implementation of special programs to support non-traditional students at the colleges and universities, and the time and resources put aside for professional development in the districts and childcare centers. Many participants, whether they were teachers, professional development providers, directors, teacher educators or policy makers recognized that the programs that had been created were improving the quality of early childhood teaching in New Jersey and were therefore benefiting some of the state’s poorest children.

While these and other successes produced a certain amount of optimism among participants, stakeholders also identified multiple barriers to the creation of a high quality system of early childhood teacher education. These barriers fell into three categories: a bureaucracy that seemed to hinder rather than support teachers upgrading their skills and credentials, insufficient standards for what constituted a high quality preschool teacher, and a lack of coordination and partnerships between and across agencies.

There was general concern about the bureaucratic aspects of the system of early childhood teacher education and professional development. As one community college teacher educator remarked, “Systems have a very hard time accommodating.” Although the system she is referring to is only a few years old, some stakeholders believed that it had already taken on some of the negative aspects of an established bureaucracy and that this was a barrier to quality. While the teachers and administrators gave personal accountings of problems with the bureaucracy, the participants in the policymakers’ focus group drew attention to the lack of oversight and central organization that they believed plagued the system. This lack of a centralized leadership may be one factor in producing a system that did not provide sufficient access to information, had substantial variability in quality, and a high level of disorganization.

A second barrier identified by stakeholders, was the perceived variability in the quality of teacher preparation programs and training opportunities. Stakeholders argued for the need to maintain high expectations or standards for the field to ensure that every classroom was staffed by a high quality teacher. While standards were a concern at district and state levels, both policymakers and higher education professors stressed the need for high academic expectations at the colleges and universities. To ensure higher expectations meant that faculty and their institutions would have to make changes and would have to be more stringent about who was accepted into their programs and what was required of them for certification and graduation. For other teacher educators, a key way to begin improving the system was not to only raise the standards about who and who does not enter and succeed in teacher preparation programs but to also create capacity in the system to support these teachers through an increase in the numbers of leaders who are early childhood specialists. As one 4-year college participant so aptly puts it, “We’re not building leaders. We’re not building educators. We’re not building the capacity.” Policy makers, on the other hand, stressed the need to regulate higher education by requiring certification programs to be nationally accredited and was putting more stringent codes in place that require programs to include particular topics as part of their coursework.

The final barrier to creating a high quality workforce is the lack of partnerships occurring between universities and school districts, and between 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, as well as the various agencies and individuals providing professional development. Every stakeholder was able to identify areas where the system or “non-system” as it has been called could be improved through partnerships, and continuity within and across components of the system. With preschool teacher preparation and professional development at the forefront of current educational discourse, these responses highlight the future directions for those of us responsible for educating teachers.

Recommendations

- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, institutions of higher education should:
 - Develop a communication campaign to disseminate information about the knowledge base required to be an effective preschool teacher.
 - Engage in a self-study or audit of the content of coursework by bringing teacher educators together along with the syllabi for their courses to discuss how they approach the teaching of particular topics and the strategies they use to assist students with difficult content.
 - Examine exemplary program in other states to elicit ideas and new perspectives.

- In response to the concerns raised by all stakeholders that there is a lack of expertise at all levels of the current system it is recommended that some effort be made to recruit and expand the numbers of qualified and experienced early childhood leaders in the state. To enact this recommendation will require not only providing enough fiscal support to the hiring of new faculty and early childhood specialists, but will also necessitate turning our attention towards the creation of new programs of training in early childhood leadership where currently only certification or doctoral programs exist.

- To ensure that collaborations between various levels of the system do not occur by happenstance or through individualized action alone we recommend that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education. This agency would:
 - Promote and support partnerships between agencies at different levels of the system.
 - Serve as a clearinghouse for partnerships and collaborations between and across levels of the professional development and teacher preparation system.
 - Ensure that the system as a whole is developing programs and services that meet the needs of the preschool workforce and the children that they serve.

Finding the Gaps, Creating Opportunities: Research to Inform the Implementation of a
Coordinated System of Professional Development and Teacher Preparation

Sharon Ryan and Carrie Lobman

Graduate School of Education
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Financial Support for this study was provided by the Foundation for Child Development
and the Carnegie Corporation of New York

Getting Qualified: A Report on the Efforts of Preschool Teachers in New Jersey's *Abbott* Districts to Improve their Qualifications

Sharon Ryan and Debra J. Ackerman

This report describes the demographics, salaries, and work experience of teachers who work in *Abbott* preschools throughout New Jersey, as well as their efforts to obtain a BA and P-3 certification by the Court's 2004 deadline. The 689 teachers who participated in this study not only work in all 30 *Abbott* districts, but are affiliated with public schools, Head Starts, and community-based programs, as well. Although our response rate varied among districts and within each of these three auspices, our final sample included 270 public school teachers (39%), 94 Head Start teachers (14%), and 325 community-based teachers (47%).

The study itself was conducted in 2002-2003 and utilized a telephone interview protocol written by the authors. The protocol examined two key areas related to implementation of high quality preschool at the classroom level. The first area of the protocol queried participants regarding their background information and work experience and history. The second area examined the teacher credentials of our sample, and sought to gain input not only on the numbers of teachers working towards any increased qualification—including a P-3 certification—but anticipated completion dates, as well. Because many preschool teachers are also non-traditional students, the protocol elicited information on the reasons teachers are seeking to improve their qualifications and the supports and barriers that may be affecting their current educational endeavors.

Results

To ensure that accurate predictions could be made, the sample was weighted to represent the total 2003-2004 teaching population of 2825 teachers in the *Abbott* districts based on data provided by the New Jersey Department of Education. The results, then, are reported as percentages of this entire population.

Demographics:

- The average age of *Abbott* preschool teachers is 38 years old and 96% are female.
- 21.1% of the *Abbott* teaching population are from countries other than the United States, and most of these teachers work in either community-based settings or Head Start programs.
- Almost half of all *Abbott* preschool teachers are White (43.6%), 32.5% are African-American, and 5.8% are Hispanic. A small proportion of teachers in the *Abbott* districts are from Asian-American or Native American backgrounds.
- Race/ethnicity of the teaching population varies across program type, with the majority of public school teachers (69.6%) being White, and less than 25% being either African-American or Hispanic.
- In the community-based settings, 39.2% of teachers are African-American, 33.4% are White, and 19.1% are Hispanic.
- In Head Start programs, just over half of teachers are African-American (50.7%), 21% are Hispanic, and 17.5% are White.

Salaries/Experience:

- Preschool teachers in the *Abbott* districts receive an average salary of \$37,050, but the average salary of teachers in public schools is \$41,834, Head Starts \$34,200, and community-based settings \$34,440.
- 60% of the *Abbott* teaching population have worked in the classroom for 5 years or more.

Meeting the 2004 *Abbott* Mandate:

- 49.2% of the teaching population is certified and therefore already meets the mandate. In addition 32.9% of teachers who are enrolled in coursework anticipate finishing their degree requirements by the court-imposed deadline.
- Another 8% of teachers may potentially meet the mandate. Teachers within this group already have attained a BA, and while not enrolled in a credentialing program at the time of this study, could have enrolled since then and completed their credentialing coursework.
- 6.9% of *Abbott* preschool teachers who are also undertaking P-3 related coursework will not meet the deadline of September 2004. The majority of these teachers, however, have indicated that they will be able to complete their course requirements within 2 years or by September 2006.
- 2.7% of the teaching population is not attempting to meet the mandate at all. The teachers within this group do not have a Bachelor's degree and are not enrolled in any kind of coursework that may lead to an early childhood teaching credential.
- 33% of the teachers who are enrolled in some kind of teacher preparation program indicated that they intend to leave their positions once they became certified. 80% of these teachers are working in community-based or Head Start preschool settings, and when asked the job they wanted instead, the majority indicated that they wanted to be a teacher in a public school setting.

Recommendations

- The deadline to become certified should be extended until September 2006 for those teachers who are currently enrolled in P-3 related coursework and can demonstrate that they will be able to meet this new deadline.
- Specific incentives need to be developed to convince teachers in community-based settings to remain within their current settings once they obtain their certification. This is particularly important given that the teachers in Head Start and community-based settings more closely reflect the demographics of students in the *Abbott* districts than do teacher in public schools.
- Attention also needs to be paid to how teachers who already have a Bachelors degree but are not enrolled in any certification program might be supported to undertake an alternate route to certification.
- The variation between districts in terms of teachers' efforts and abilities to meet the mandate would suggest that some districts have been more successful in recruiting and/or supporting their preschool teachers. It would seem worthwhile to initiate some kind of investigation to identify the common strategies employed by these districts to ensure that teachers have been able to meet the mandate on time.

* Full version of report is available at <http://nieer.org>

Educating Preschool Teachers: Mapping the Teacher Preparation and Professional Development System in New Jersey

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin, & Debra J. Ackerman

This report maps the system of preschool teacher preparation and professional development in the state of New Jersey. The main purposes of this study were to: 1.) examine the capacity of the system to meet the ongoing demand for preschool teachers, 2.) to document the content of teacher preparation programs and professional development workshops, and 3.) to identify the gaps that exist between what standards recommend preschool teachers need to know and be able to do and the programs available to teachers in New Jersey.

One hundred and sixteen representatives from the 140 agencies and institutions that provide preschool teacher training were included in this study. The sample consisted of 12 representatives from four-year colleges, 17 representatives from community colleges, 29 representatives from Abbott districts, 42 representatives from non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts, and 17 representatives from resource and referral agencies. The interview protocol was conducted in 2003-2004. Interview protocols focused on the content of training offered, the current capacity of institutions, and outreach and partnerships that had been developed with other agencies.

Findings

Capacity and Content of Four-Year Colleges and Universities:

- Approximately 2,600 students enrolled in approved P-3 certification programs. 58% of these students are enrolled in traditional 4-year undergraduate certification programs, 24% are in an approved alternate route program, and the remaining students are enrolled in various post-baccalaureate programs including endorsement programs.
- 162 faculty members teach in early childhood programs in these universities- 75 are full-time faculty (half of which are tenured) and 87 are part-time and adjunct faculty.
- The mean ratio of full-time faculty to student is 1:43, with variation across institutions from 1:2 to 1:156.
- 61 of the full-time faculty members are white, 8 are African-American, five are Asian-American and one is Latina. Five of the 12 schools have entirely white early childhood faculty.
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in early childhood or related field (child development or another degree that specifically covers children younger than kindergarten age) and 85% have had direct employment experience with three and four year olds.
- Students currently in P-3 preparation programs at 2- or 4-year colleges are more likely to receive stand alone coursework in child development, curriculum, and literacy than in other content areas or diversity issues.
 - Almost 90% of programs devote an entire class to curriculum development.
 - Almost 80% of the programs offer literacy as a stand alone class, while some do not include social studies, math, music and art in any of the coursework.
 - 38% of the programs require student to take an entire class on working with

children with special needs, while three programs do not address this topic at all.

- Students in alternate route programs are less likely to receive coursework in the areas of math ($p < .05$), play ($p < .05$), and early childhood assessment methods ($p < .05$).

Capacity and Content at Two-Year Community Colleges

- Approximately 3,200 students were enrolled early childhood programs in community colleges.
- There are 105 early childhood faculty members- 34 full-time (60% tenured) and 71 part-time faculty.
- Mean ratio of students to faculty is 1:35, varying from 1:11 to 1:225.
- 81 faculty are White, 11 are African American, three are Latina, and 1 is Asian/Pacific Islander, 9 are unknown.
- Half of the schools (16 of 17 responded to this question) have all-White faculties
- 75% of the early childhood faculty has a degree in Early Childhood or a related field and 69% have experience working with children ages 3-4 years.
- Between 80 and 90% offer philosophical foundations, curriculum development, play, DAP, and classroom management as part or all of a required class.
- Literacy, art, and music/movement are all offered as a stand-alone class in over 50% of the community colleges.
- Over 50% of the colleges have an entire course devoted to working with young children with special needs, while only 12% devote a full class to working with children from diverse cultures and 6% devote a full class to issues of ELL.
- Community colleges that offer an Associates of Applied Science in early childhood (a non-transferable degree) are more likely to offer coursework in the areas of curriculum development, literacy, math, science, art, foundations and working with children with special needs than were schools with just an AA degree.

Capacity and Content of Agencies that Provide Professional Development

Abbott and non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts

- The 71 districts participating in this study offered a total of 1,127 workshops with more than 12,500 teachers attending during the 2003-2004.
- 50% of workshop trainers have a degree specializing in early childhood or a related field and 70% have had direct employment experience working with 3- and 4-year-old children.
- 40% of workshops offered by districts were related to early childhood curriculum while only 10% addressed diversity topics including multiculturalism, ELL, and working with children with special needs.
- Abbott districts are more likely than non-Abbott ECPA districts (significant at the $p < .05$ level) to offer workshops in assessment, setting up the classroom environment, child development, behavior management, DAP, working with children with special needs, and health and safety issues.

Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R)

- The 17 R&Rs offered 984 workshops this past year with a total of 3970 participants.
- Of the 159 workshop instructors employed at R&Rs, 64% have a degree in early childhood

or a related field and 78% had experience working with 3-and 4-year-olds.

- 100% of R&Rs offer training in behavior management, curriculum, and working with families and over 80% offer training in diversity, working with children with special needs.

Community Colleges

- 8 of the 17 community colleges offer not-for-credit workshops and trainings for preschool teachers.
- 115 workshops were offered at these community colleges last year with a total of 1,480 people attending.
- 90% of the 69 workshop instructors at community colleges have a degree in early childhood education or a related field and all have experience working with 3-and 4-year-old children.
- The highest proportion of workshops were offered in the area of curriculum practice and the fewest addressed diversity issues.

Outreach and Partnerships

For-Credit Partnerships

- 11 of the 2- and 4-year colleges were in partnerships with other agencies. Of these partnerships, 8 community colleges have articulation agreements with 4-year universities enabling students to count some of their early childhood coursework towards P-3 certification.
- Half of the 4-year colleges and universities reported partnering with (9) districts and (2) R&Rs.
- 5 community colleges offer for-credit coursework at a local district or R&R.

Not for Credit Partnerships

- 2 universities reported partnering with other 4-year universities to provide conferences and workshops.
- 22 districts reported working with a local consortium to provide professional development for their preschool teachers.
- 11 school districts collaborated with other districts to provide professional development.

Recommendations

As the findings from this study attest there is a wide range of training and certification programs available in this state should a preschool teacher want to both obtain a teaching credential and improve their expertise. However, the two components of teacher education, teacher preparation and professional development, continue to work primarily in isolation from one another and as a consequence, opportunities for effective and long lasting improvement in educational practice are being minimized. With the aim of forging further partnerships and linkages within and across programs and agencies we make the following recommendations:

Teacher Preparation Programs

- Two- and four-year colleges should create an agreed upon standard for student: faculty ratios to ensure adequate advisement about programs and coursework.
- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate

curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, 2- and 4-year colleges should engage in a self study or audit of the content of coursework.

- Two- and four-year colleges should examine the qualifications and expertise of faculty regarding diversity issues and take steps to ensure those faculties improve their knowledge and skills in these areas.
- The Commission on Higher Education should bring together the Deans of the 2- and 4-year colleges on a regular basis to discuss variability within the current system, and to develop agreed upon principles for hiring and training of faculty and staffing programs.

Ongoing Professional Development

- The state Department of Education (DOE) should assess whether districts have the administrative resources that they need to ensure that their preschool teachers receive appropriate training opportunities.
- The state DOE should require non-Abbott ECPA districts to follow the same guidelines for professional development as Abbott districts and should provide adequate resources to do so.
- School districts, R&Rs, and community colleges should build more effective partnerships to increase collaboration and reduce duplication in providing ongoing professional development to preschool teachers.

Towards Creating a Coordinated System

While there are valuable partnerships occurring across institutions, for the most part they appear to be ad hoc and individually created leaving those teaching in smaller districts and further from colleges and universities at a disadvantage. To ensure consistency and continuity in the development of the preschool teacher workforce, New Jersey must now target its financial and human resources to the development of a more coordinated system of teacher preparation and professional development. Currently there is no committee or agency charged with the responsibility of overseeing both professional development and teacher education for a specific sector. This coordination is particularly critical in preschool education because the workforce is extraordinarily diverse in qualifications, knowledge, and level of experience and is located in a range of settings that have historically been regulated differently. It is therefore recommended that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education.

Toward a Unified System of Early Childhood Teacher Education and Professional Development: Conversations with Stakeholders

Carrie Lobman, Sharon Ryan, Jill McLaughlin

The report examines the experiences and perceptions of those involved in the creation of a new system of teacher preparation and professional development in New Jersey. The questions guiding this study were: 1) What do various stakeholders believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do, 2) What kinds of experiences do they believe contribute to this development, 3) What are the components of an effective system of teacher education and professional development and, 4) What do various stakeholders perceive to be the barriers and supports in the current system that influence the provision of quality teacher preparation and development experiences for preschool teachers?

Thirty-eight individuals participated in eight focus group interviews. The sample included 16 preschool teachers, 11 professional development providers or administrators, 5 teacher educators from 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, and 6 state policymakers. The interview protocols concentrated on four main topics: definitions of the knowledge, dispositions, and skills preschool teachers need to have, the content of current preparation and professional development experiences and perceived gaps in current offerings, barriers and supports in the current system, and ideas about improving the current system.

Summary of the Findings

Two themes emerged from the analysis of the focus group transcripts. The first theme addresses the relationship between the discourse of research concerning the knowledge base required by preschool teachers and what those in the field believe preschool teachers need to be able to know and do. The second theme is concerned with the overall system of early childhood teacher development and examines some of the barriers and supports currently in place that hinder or aid the development of such a system in New Jersey.

Content and Form of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Similar to current research and literature on teacher preparation there is agreement that preschool teachers need a foundation in child development coupled with knowledge of various teaching strategies that will enable them to enact developmentally appropriate practices. Echoing the literature that teacher development opportunities must be linked to practice and engage teachers in collaborative inquiry (Lieberman & Miller, 2001), teachers and those who educate them also repeatedly talked about on-site learning experiences in which teachers educate one another. In order to optimize teacher learning, stakeholders agreed that training should be individualized and coordinated so that teachers build on their learning experiences. Alongside these points of agreement were three areas where stakeholders diverged in their views about the content and delivery of teacher education and training opportunities.

First, missing from these conversations is attention to the kinds of knowledge and skills that

national standards say teachers need to be able to work with students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds. To be sure several teachers and teacher educators spoke about teachers having to know how to support families and children who often live in difficult circumstances but diversity as one of the everyday aspects of teaching no matter the context was not as prevalent in these conversations. Moreover, aside from literacy, there was also little attention given to the kinds of domain specific knowledge being called for in educational policies. While respondents mentioned math and science, there were no substantive ideas about how teachers could be prepared to teach these subjects. These responses suggest that there is currently a gap between what the current policy context is expecting preschool teachers to know and be able to do and the traditional practice of teacher education and professional development.

A second point of divergence is whether everything a teacher needs to be able to do can be taught or whether it also involves having a set of dispositions or traits that make one more suited to teaching. As administrators and professional development providers raised this issue more than anyone else, their concerns may reflect the difficulties in finding teaching staff that can connect with children on an emotional level. Yet, in identifying that preschool teachers need to be able to “love” children, they potentially also draw attention to the marginalization of the socio-emotional aspects of teaching in current policy discussions of early childhood. When coupled with administrators views that teachers also need to possess the communication and interpersonal skills to be able to work effectively with other adults, these responses suggest that some space must be made in the curriculum for these aspects of teaching in addition to the focus on diversity issues, foundational knowledge, and curriculum content.

A third tension arose between the relative value of onsite learning to teach experiences and classroom based coursework and workshops. While workshops and coursework were not discussed negatively, what was striking was that they were barely discussed at all. When asked what types of experiences are needed to develop high quality preschool teachers, participants from all stakeholder groups identified onsite learning that took place directly in preschool classrooms. However, despite the inclusion of mentors and master teachers in the new system, the bulk of teacher education and professional development still takes place in workshops and college classes.

The System of Preschool Teacher Development

Participants were aware and proud of the fact that a system of preschool preparation and professional development had been created in New Jersey in a relatively short period of time. It was recognized that this system was both preparing large numbers of certified teachers and providing those teachers with an astounding amount of professional development. Stakeholders identified pockets of strength at all levels of the system, including the leadership of Ellen Frede at the state level, the implementation of special programs to support non-traditional students at the colleges and universities, and the time and resources put aside for professional development in the districts and childcare centers. Many participants, whether they were teachers, professional development providers, directors, teacher educators or policy makers recognized that the programs that had been created were improving the quality of early childhood teaching in New Jersey and were therefore benefiting some of the state’s poorest children.

While these and other successes produced a certain amount of optimism among participants, stakeholders also identified multiple barriers to the creation of a high quality system of early childhood teacher education. These barriers fell into three categories: a bureaucracy that seemed to hinder rather than support teachers upgrading their skills and credentials, insufficient standards for what constituted a high quality preschool teacher, and a lack of coordination and partnerships between and across agencies.

There was general concern about the bureaucratic aspects of the system of early childhood teacher education and professional development. As one community college teacher educator remarked, “Systems have a very hard time accommodating.” Although the system she is referring to is only a few years old, some stakeholders believed that it had already taken on some of the negative aspects of an established bureaucracy and that this was a barrier to quality. While the teachers and administrators gave personal accountings of problems with the bureaucracy, the participants in the policymakers’ focus group drew attention to the lack of oversight and central organization that they believed plagued the system. This lack of a centralized leadership may be one factor in producing a system that did not provide sufficient access to information, had substantial variability in quality, and a high level of disorganization.

A second barrier identified by stakeholders, was the perceived variability in the quality of teacher preparation programs and training opportunities. Stakeholders argued for the need to maintain high expectations or standards for the field to ensure that every classroom was staffed by a high quality teacher. While standards were a concern at district and state levels, both policymakers and higher education professors stressed the need for high academic expectations at the colleges and universities. To ensure higher expectations meant that faculty and their institutions would have to make changes and would have to be more stringent about who was accepted into their programs and what was required of them for certification and graduation. For other teacher educators, a key way to begin improving the system was not to only raise the standards about who and who does not enter and succeed in teacher preparation programs but to also create capacity in the system to support these teachers through an increase in the numbers of leaders who are early childhood specialists. As one 4-year college participant so aptly puts it, “We’re not building leaders. We’re not building educators. We’re not building the capacity.” Policy makers, on the other hand, stressed the need to regulate higher education by requiring certification programs to be nationally accredited and was putting more stringent codes in place that require programs to include particular topics as part of their coursework.

The final barrier to creating a high quality workforce is the lack of partnerships occurring between universities and school districts, and between 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, as well as the various agencies and individuals providing professional development. Every stakeholder was able to identify areas where the system or “non-system” as it has been called could be improved through partnerships, and continuity within and across components of the system. With preschool teacher preparation and professional development at the forefront of current educational discourse, these responses highlight the future directions for those of us responsible for educating teachers.

Recommendations

- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, institutions of higher education should:
 - Develop a communication campaign to disseminate information about the knowledge base required to be an effective preschool teacher.
 - Engage in a self-study or audit of the content of coursework by bringing teacher educators together along with the syllabi for their courses to discuss how they approach the teaching of particular topics and the strategies they use to assist students with difficult content.
 - Examine exemplary program in other states to elicit ideas and new perspectives.

- In response to the concerns raised by all stakeholders that there is a lack of expertise at all levels of the current system it is recommended that some effort be made to recruit and expand the numbers of qualified and experienced early childhood leaders in the state. To enact this recommendation will require not only providing enough fiscal support to the hiring of new faculty and early childhood specialists, but will also necessitate turning our attention towards the creation of new programs of training in early childhood leadership where currently only certification or doctoral programs exist.

- To ensure that collaborations between various levels of the system do not occur by happenstance or through individualized action alone we recommend that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education. This agency would:
 - Promote and support partnerships between agencies at different levels of the system.
 - Serve as a clearinghouse for partnerships and collaborations between and across levels of the professional development and teacher preparation system.
 - Ensure that the system as a whole is developing programs and services that meet the needs of the preschool workforce and the children that they serve.