

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
1.0 Overview	2
2.0 Background and Rationale	2
3.0 Workforce Needs Assessment	3
Context and Background	3
Role of Palm Beach Community College	4
Purposes of the Workforce Needs Assessment	4
Methods	5
Field Testing	5
Sampling and Mailing Process	5
Focus Groups	6
4.0 Directors Survey	7
Summary of the Results	7
Key Findings	11
5.0 Workforce Survey	13
Summary of the Results	13
Key Findings	16
6.0 Family Child Care Survey	18
Summary of the Results	18
Key Findings	22
7.0 Comparisons Across Surveys	24
8.0 Recommendations	26
References	27
Appendixes	
A: Focus Group Results	28
B: Director Survey Results	31
C: Workforce Survey Results	51
D: Family Child Care Survey Results	63
E: How Directors Perceive Staff Training, Education And Professional Development	75

1.0 OVERVIEW

This report describes a needs and interests assessment conducted in Palm Beach County, during 2005. The primary goal of the assessment was to become better informed about the nature and needs of the early care and education workforce in Palm Beach County. Specifically, the assessment was directed to sample populations of child care center directors, child care center staff, and family child care home owners/operators.

The needs assessment, funded by the Children's Services Council, is part of the comprehensive plan created by the Palm Beach County Education Commission. The Commission has established a number of partnerships and collaborations to create a seamless education system that will promote the care, support, and education of children and youth from birth to the formal K-20 education system.

A group called Career Development in Child Development (CD2), a Toppel Family Foundation Initiative, was created in 2003 to focus on the professional development system for early care and education personnel. CD2 is working to ensure that early care and education activities are cohesive, coordinated, and aligned, and to produce a countywide Professional Development Plan targeted to the needs of the workforce and to ensure that children receive the highest quality early education. This is a major, ongoing, and multiyear effort.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In Florida, the number of children younger than age five who potentially might be placed in child care has increased from 953,181 in 1999 to 1,019,328 in 2003 (Birken, 2005). According to the 2000 census, 11.3% of the population in Florida was ages birth to 4 years, and 18.2% of the population in Palm Beach County was in this age category (Birken, 2004). Given the growth in the nation, in Florida, and in Palm Beach County, vigilance on behalf of our young children is essential. Professional development is paramount. Research has consistently demonstrated that high quality early childhood experiences are key to realizing good outcomes for children, and the extent of education and training of workforce members is essential to providing good care.

- Young children's learning and development clearly depends on the educational qualifications of their teachers (Barnett, December, 2004).
- A recent history of child development training and higher formal education levels are associated with high quality interactions between family child care providers and the children in care. The National Research Council report, Eager to Learn, recommends the minimum standard for teachers of 3 and 4 year old children should be a four-year degree with specialized training in early childhood education (Bowmen, 2003).
- There is evidence that regardless of family income, children who have participated in child care programs did better in school than their peers who did not. Likewise, quality child care has been shown to contribute to reductions in special education costs, lower school drop out rates, and levels of criminal activity (Cubed, 2002).

In Florida and nationwide, the need for well-trained and well-qualified child care professionals is increasing. Also growing is the effort to increase wages and benefits in the profession. It is well-known that those who care for children are poorly compensated and receive inadequate benefits. Quality of care also is impacted by turnover, funding, education, and training. It is during a child's first years of life that we must invest in the business of early care and education. There is no acceptable alternative but to improve the child care workforce.

- Preschool teacher quality is strongly linked to compensation. Poor pay and benefits make it difficult to recruit and hire professionally qualified early education teachers. American preschool teachers are paid less than half of a kindergarten teacher's salary. Pay and benefits for assistant teachers is even worse (Barnett, December 2004).
- Public policies to improve teacher compensation, together with higher standards and accountability, can improve preschool program quality and child outcomes (Barnett, May 2003).
- Nationally, 13.9% of preschool teachers reported a yearly salary below the federal poverty guidelines, and 70.9% earned a salary below the threshold for 'low income' (Gillman, 2005).

- Overall, child care is not a high paying field. The average salary for a child care worker ranges from a high of \$21,060 in Massachusetts to a low of \$12,990 in Louisiana. However, the job frequently provides one key benefit that is important to working parents: their own free or subsidized child care. Approximately 40% of child care workers have children. To the extent that these workers rely on their employers (or themselves, if self-employed) to subsidize some or all of the costs of care for their children, the value of job benefits may be equal to half again as much as their take-home pay (Cubed, 2002).
- Weighted national proportions showed that 59.1% of assistant teachers (who work in preschool classrooms with lead teachers) hold a high school diploma or GED as their highest credential; 17.3% have a CDA and 23.6% have an associate's degree or higher (Gillman, 2005).

Implementing formal systems for studying the workforce at the local, state, and national levels is imperative. Mechanisms to establish a profile of the current workforce and then to measure and track changes help us gauge our progress and identify needs. The availability of and accessibility to national and state data provides useful benchmarks for counties studying their child care workforce, for forecasting needs, and for sharing effective practices. Increasingly, information is becoming available, but local efforts are essential in order to understand grass roots needs.

- Faculty from institutions of higher learning reported the issue of workforce development, including recruitment and retention, as a major challenge facing Florida (Birken, 2004).
- In Florida, the Early Care and Education Workforce Study created a statewide database of information about the child care workforce. The data described bleak salaries, benefits, and career ladder opportunities for child care workers (Mulliss, 2001).
- Workforce data are gathered by national and state agencies, but no national source provides reliable information on the number of caregivers of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in typical child care settings, by job positions. (Stahr Breunig, 2003). Definitions of positions held in various child care settings are inconsistent within and across states, making for inadequate counts. The Department of Labor does not collect data on the self-employed; family child care homes are not tracked. Domestic workers are also excluded. Finally, since many paid relatives do not self-identify as child care workers, they also are not included in Department of Labor Statistics data.
- U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS) reports the number of persons caring for children in their own homes as a business, but CPS data do not distinguish among caregivers who are paid or unpaid, relatives or non-relatives. Furthermore, the CPS data mix kindergarten teachers with preschool teachers, thus including workers (kindergarten teachers) who may not be considered part of the early care and education workforce (Herzenberg, 2005).
- A study by the National Economics of the Child Care Sector indicated that the licensed child care industry directly employs more Americans than public secondary schools, and is directly responsible for twice as many jobs as the farming sector (Cubed, 2002).

3.0 WORKFORCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Context and Background

Development of the strategic plan for the Professional Development System for early care and education professionals in Palm Beach County began in 2003. Career Development in Child Development (CD2) was formed as a short-term initiative to lead this project. CD2 involved a number of stakeholders. The Toppel Family Foundation was designated to head CD2, and the Education Commission was chosen as the administrative home.

One of the recommendations in the strategic plan was to "establish a countywide vision and overall workforce professional development plan for early childhood education and care and continually update." Toward this end, a steering committee was formed to develop and implement a needs assessment to gather information about the educational status, professional needs and expectations, and barriers to continued professional training.

The coordination role for the needs assessment was undertaken by the Palm Beach Community College (PBCC) Institute of Excellence in Early Care and Education in partnership with the Children’s Service Council (CSC) of Palm Beach County and Florida Atlantic University (FAU). The steering committee included representatives from FAU, Palm Beach County Head Start, PBCC, Palm Beach Atlantic University, Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA), and CD2. These stakeholders represented the interests of early care and education professionals, and created a strong community partnerships critical to success.

The Role of Palm Beach Community College

PBCC entered into a child care training contract with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and is the Training Coordinating Agency for Palm Beach County. In this capacity, PBCC offers all of the state-mandated training for child care workers, oversees child care training instructors, and houses records on classes, students, and certificates for Palm Beach County. This statewide system ensures that training records will be easily accessible by DCF and all training coordinating agencies.

Within PBCC, the Institute of Excellence in Early Care and Education (IEECE), created in 1999 as part of the school readiness legislation, works closely with many agencies and organizations in order to promote education and training opportunities for teachers of young children, and to advance high quality early education programs for young children. The mission of the Institute is to provide the child care workforce of Palm Beach County with a comprehensive approach to career development in the field of early childhood education.

PBCC offers options in child care training from entry-level coursework to the two-year associate’s degree. There are many career paths and opportunities in the field of early childhood education. Many students take the teaching track, earning the Associate of Arts degree (AA). With this general education degree, students can transfer to a Florida public university as a junior to complete a bachelor’s degree. Specifically, they will soon be able to transfer to FAU for a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education (BACE), which is a teacher certification degree.

In Florida, the 40-Hour Introductory Child Care Training is a first step for individuals wishing to work at a child care center, and this certificate is necessary for those wishing to earn the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. From there, PBCC offers the Associate of Science degree in Early Childhood Education. A logical next step in the career path for these graduates is the Bachelor in Early Care and Education (BECE) degree, under development at FAU.

FAU is in the process now of developing the BECE degree, birth to five, non-teacher certification—an inverted capstone degree program (Moreno, 2004). Practitioners with a CDA would pursue this track, moving from the CDA to the Associate of Science degree, and on to the BECE. Those with the Associate in Arts degree would articulate to the BACE (age 3 to grade 3 and a teacher certification degree). PBCC and FAU are interested in determining if the community can support both degree programs. Articulation between PBCC and FAU is essential in order to link programs, faculties, campuses, and community entities so there is normal advancement and a smooth transition through the education system.

PBCC and FAU share the vision of developing smooth career pathways for early education professionals in the county. In order to ensure that Florida’s early childhood teachers have the opportunity to reach their professional and educational goals to become better prepared to facilitate children’s early and foundational learning, the process of articulation needs priority recognition and the current system needs to be critically assessed (Birken, 2005).

Purposes of the Workforce Needs Assessment

The purposes of the Workforce Survey Needs and Interest Assessment in Palm Beach County were threefold:

1. to develop a description of the education level of the current early care and education workforce
2. to identify personal and institutional access issues and barriers
3. to identify current and projected education and training needs and interests of the early care and education workforce

A major goal of those involved in this needs assessment is to build a seamless approach to training and producing early childhood professionals, from the high school level to the doctoral level. This requires continuous assessment of the workforce. Articulation agreements have been built between high schools and colleges in Palm Beach County in the form of Career Academies. Students interested in careers as teachers, child psychologists, and social workers can earn their CDA while in high school, and coursework will articulate to an AS degree and to the proposed BECE degree at FAU. Of particular interest to PBCC and FAU is the development and alignment of courses and degree programs so there is a

smooth matriculation from the associate's level to the bachelor's level and to the master's level. Potentially, a doctoral Degree may become available. It was anticipated that data gathered by the Workforce Survey would shed light on the extent to which the community can support Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts programs in Early Childhood Education, as well as assessing career aspirations beyond those educational levels.

Methods

Over several months, the steering committee studied and discussed needs assessment models (McNeil, 1990; Guglielmino, 1995; Kowalski, 1988) to ensure that appropriate steps were followed in the needs assessment process. Purposes of the effort were refined with an understanding that this process would be a starting point, and would provide direction so that appropriate professional development systems and programs could be developed for child care professionals.

It was determined that a survey would be used to gather information. The target populations were identified, and details about sampling procedures, costs, resources, analysis and interpretation of the data, and the constructive use of the results were settled. The surveys and cover letters were designed to gather demographic data, information about education levels, wages and benefits, educational goals, curriculum approaches used in the classroom, barriers and incentives to training, and training topics of interest.

Three versions of the needs assessment instrument were created for the three target population groups: directors of licensed child care centers (Director Survey), staff in these centers (Workforce Survey), and owners/operators of licensed family child care homes (Family Child Care Survey). There were slight differences in the surveys, and the introductory letter/instructions were adjusted as appropriate for the populations. As an incentive for completing the surveys, respondents participated in a raffle for twenty \$100 gift certificates to Target.

Field Testing

The final drafts of the Director Survey and the Workforce Survey were field tested in April, at three sites, and included three center directors and ten teachers. The site selections and individuals included were a fair representation of the target group. The field-test site in Lake Worth employed primarily Spanish-speaking teachers and served Hispanic children. A second site in Riviera Beach employed African-American teachers and served that population primarily. A third site in Palm Beach Gardens employed a mix of teachers and served mostly Caucasian children. One director held a high school diploma with certificates, another had a Bachelor's in Child Development, and another had a Master's in Business Administration. The education levels of the teachers in the field test group ranged from a high school diploma with 40-hour training to the CDA credential, and included one teacher with a foreign degree who needed the questions translated.

Discussions with the field test group uncovered language and wording concerns, missing options, needed clarifications, confusions, biases, and so on. This step in the survey development process ensured that the final instrument(s) would be sensitive to nuances of the target populations. Adjustments were made, and the survey was ready for distribution to center directors and their workforce, in early May.

Sampling and Mailing Process

The Director Surveys and the Workforce Surveys were distributed to a sample of child care facilities in Palm Beach County. The listing of licensed child care centers was provided by the Florida Department of Health. A sample of 84 (20%) was selected using a table of random numbers. A packet including the cover letters, surveys, raffle tickets, and collection/return envelopes were mailed to these center directors, on May 10. The directors were asked to distribute the Workforce Cover Letter and Survey to their staffs. Over the next several days, steering committee staff telephoned the centers to inform them about the project and alert them to the mailing. As of May 25, returns were received from 37 directors and 595 staff. A second mailing to 40 centers (randomly chosen from those not selected in the first sample group and using a table of random numbers) was done, representing 40 directors and 438 staff. A total of 65 Director Surveys (representing a 52% return rate) and 749 Workforce Surveys were returned for analysis.

Family child care providers were surveyed, in August. The Florida Department of Health provided a listing of licensed family child care centers in the county. The same sampling process was used, and a single mailing of Family Child Care Surveys was sent to 120 facilities. A total of 36 were returned by the cut-off date of August 26, representing a 30% return rate.

Focus Groups

Two focus group meetings were held in August, one for directors and one for lead teachers. Twenty centers were randomly selected from those who had responded to the Directors' Survey. Six Directors and nine Lead Teachers attended.

The topic of the sessions was Career Pathways in Child Development, and the participants received a packet in advance of the sessions. Included were the new materials developed by the PBCC Institute of Excellence in Early Care and Education. The purpose of the focus group sessions was to elicit discussion about training opportunities in early education in Palm Beach County. The discussion and suggestions from the directors and teachers who attended also provided data that could be cross-tabulated with data from the needs assessment results. Notes from the focus groups appear in Appendix A.

4.0 DIRECTORS SURVEY

In September, Director Surveys were reviewed by the directors of the Institute of Excellence in Early Care and Education and the Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness. There were no surveys returned from the School District, and only a small number of returns from centers categorized as Private, Non-Profit, Head Start, or Redlands Christian Migrant Association. Therefore, these returns were collapsed into one category labeled “Other.” The data were then compared across three categories: Private, For-Profit, Faith-Based, and Other.

The statistical analysis completed by the Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness appears in its entirety in Appendix B. In eight of the questions on the 21-item survey, respondents were asked to select all choices that applied (Q4, Q8, Q11, Q12, Q16, Q19, Q20, Q21). Two questions were open ended (Q5 and Q10), and the instrument concluded with an invitation to comment. The survey yielded, therefore, many tables and hundreds of comments.

The 21-item survey was meant to capture directors’ views about their staffs with regard to professional development in order that institutions of higher learning in Palm Beach County might better serve the early care and education workforce. The training needs of directors, themselves, were not sought. For purposes of this report, a profile of the 65 respondents is first presented followed by key findings.

Summary of the Results

A total of 65 returns were received from center directors. Nearly half of the center directors who responded to the survey came from Private, For-Profit centers and 23% from Faith-Based centers. The remaining respondents were from Private-Non-Profit centers, Head Start, or Redlands Christian Migrant Association centers. Question 2 on the survey gives a sense of center size and capacity: 24% of the respondents reported employing over 10 caregiving/teaching staff; 20% reported employing 7 to 9 staff. When reporting on the staff that had the CDA (Q3), 83% of the directors reported employing one or more lead teachers with CDAs; 63% employed one or more associate teachers with CDAs; 41% employed one or more aides with CDAs. The percentage of CDA credentialed staff employed in centers increased as the job positions required education.

Questions 4 and 8 (Tables 1 and 2) on the survey concerned directors’ views and practices about hiring staffs, and respondents could check as many answers as applied. When asked to describe CDA recruiting and hiring experiences, directors reported, most frequently and consistently across the three center types, that CDAs were hard to find (45%). Ranked second was that directors could find CDAs, but the prospective employee was unqualified for the work (32%). Just over 18% reported that CDAs ask too high a wage. There were noticeable differences between the responses of Faith-Based directors and the other center types: one-third of the Faith-Based centers said they hired only CDAs and more frequently reported that they found them difficult to locate.

In the case of recruiting, hiring, and retaining entry-level staff (Q8), directors reported (65%) they hire people without the 40-hour requirement and support their registration and completion of this certificate; 30% reported they only hire people who have passed this requirement; 30% also reported they had employees who had taken the 40-hour test but had not passed all sections. Faith-Based centers reported more frequently than Private, For-Profit or Other centers that they hired people without the 40-hour requirement, and supported their completion of the requirement.

Table 1: Frequency, Percent, and Ranking of Responses to: Describe your experiences recruiting and hiring CDA-level staff: check all that apply (Q4)

Choice	Private, For-Profit		Faith-Based		Other		Total		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	Rank
Not applicable, I only hire CDAs and above	3	9.4	5	33.3	4	22.2	12	18.5	3
Can find CDAs, but they tend to be unqualified for the work I expect	13	43.3	2	13.3	6	37.5	21	32.3	2
CDAs ask too high a wage	6	20.0	2	13.3	4	25.0	12	18.5	3
CDAs are very difficult to find	14	46.7	8	53.3	7	43.8	29	44.6	1
Can find CDAs, but they soon leave my center	2	6.7	0	0.0	1	5.9	3	4.6	5

Table 2: Frequency, Percent, and Ranking of Responses to: Describe your experiences recruiting, hiring, and retaining entry-level staff : check all that apply (Q8)

Choice	Private, For-Profit		Faith-Based		Other		Total		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	Rank
I hire only people who have passed the state-wide 40-hour requirement	10	31.3	2	13.3	7	43.8	19	29.2	3
I cannot find people to hire who have completed the state-wide 40-hour requirement.	3	9.4	1	6.7	4	25.0	8	12.3	5
I have employees who have taken the 40-hour competency test, but have not passed all sections.	10	31.3	4	26.7	6	37.5	20	30.8	2
I have employees that I have to terminate because they could not pass the 40-hour competency test	7	21.9	1	6.7	1	6.3	9	13.8	4
I would be interested in tutoring to help staff pass the 40-hour competency test.	5	15.6	0	0.0	1	6.3	6	9.2	6
I hire people without the 40-hour requirement and support their registration and completion.	22	68.8	12	80.0	8	50.0	42	64.6	1

Credentials that directors valued when hiring new associate teachers and lead teachers were of interest to the committee (Q17 and Q18) overseeing the needs assessment. Table 3 presents the number of directors who responded that the credential was ‘very important’ when hiring teachers. (Details are available in Appendix B.) When directors hired new associate teachers, the AA or AS degree and the BA or BS degree were considered ‘very’ or ‘somewhat important’ to approximately 84% of the directors. These credentials were also the most important to directors when they hired lead teachers. Work experience was not important to 78% of the directors when hiring associate or lead teachers, nor was a high school diploma. No directors felt the CDA was ‘very important’ when hiring lead teachers, and only 3 felt it ‘very important’ for associate teachers. For both teacher levels, directors, on average, reported that ongoing in-service training was not important. Generally, directors placed equal values on the same credentials regardless of whether the new hire was for an associate teacher or a lead teacher position. These results are interesting when aligned with responses to Question 14: when asked if they thought it important that training received by their teaching staff be linked to a career pathway for their teachers, only 5% of directors felt this was ‘very important;’ 28% ‘somewhat important.’ Further along in this report are data about bonuses; results to that question (Q9) do not soundly demonstrate that staff is financially rewarded for educational advancement.

Table 3: Number Reporting Credentials are VERY IMPORTANT when Hiring Associate or Lead Teachers (Q17 and Q18)

Credential	Private, For-Profit		Faith-Based		Other	
	Assoc	Lead	Assoc	Lead	Assoc	Lead
High school diploma	0	0	0	0	0	0
Work experience	1	3	0	1	0	1
CDA	1	0	1	0	1	0
College credits in Early Childhood	0	0	0	0	2	2
AA or AS degree	11	4	3	2	5	4
BS or BA	13	8	3	3	7	7
Ongoing in-service training	1	3	1	1	1	1

Several questions focused on wages and benefits. The average starting wage (fixed) ranged from \$7.50 in Private, For-Profit centers to \$9.32 in the Other category for associate teachers, and from \$7.29 in Private, For Profit centers to \$10.80 in the Other category for lead teachers. Directors reported wage ranges for associate teachers, on average, from \$7.13 to \$8.69, and for lead teachers, from \$8.38 to \$11.02 per hour. About 1/3 of the respondents reported they gave the same starting wage to associate teachers (average of \$8.43) and the same starting wage to lead teachers (average \$9.29) regardless of their education. The average starting wage for lead teachers in Private, For-Profit centers was lower than for associate teachers, but that may be due to inconsistent job title definitions. The upper range of the average starting wage was highest in the Other category (\$9.37 for associate teachers and \$12.01 for lead teachers).

Question 9 asked about raises staff members could receive for completing career benchmarks. Table 4 summarizes pay raises in place (regardless of amount) by center type. Forty percent of the centers in the sample rewarded staff for moving from no credential to the 40-hour certificate, with increases ranging from \$2 at the high end to \$.01 at the low end. Seventy percent of the centers rewarded advancement to the CDA; 64% gave raises when employees moved from the CDA to the associate degree. Private For-Profit centers, in 29 of 32 cases, gave staff a raise when the CDA was earned. Almost half the centers rewarded advancements to the bachelor 's degree although, surprisingly, more centers reported giving raises when staff earned their degrees in a field other than early childhood or in education. Directors more frequently gave raises when staff received the CDA and/or the associate degree.

Table 4: Frequency of Centers Giving Raises (of any amount) for Professional Advancement (Q9)

Choice	Private, For-Profit		Faith-Based		Other		Total	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
From No Credential to 40-hour	16	16	6	9	4	14	26 40%	39 60%
From 40-hour to CDA	29	3	10	5	6	12	45 70%	20 30%
From CDA to Associate's Degree	24	8	8	7	9	9	41 64%	24 36%
From Associate's Degree to Bachelors (other than ECE or Education)	17	15	5	10	9	9	31 48%	34 52%
From Associate's Degree to Bachelors in ECE or Education	15	17	5	10	9	9	29 45%	36 55%
From Associate's Degree to Bachelors With state teacher certification	15	17	5	10	9	9	29 45%	36 55%

Question 9 also looked at bonuses based on degree/credential completion. Thirty-five of the 65 centers responding had a bonus program for advancement from "no credential to 40 hour." Bonuses beyond that were rare. One Faith-Based center reported a bonus of \$5000 for staff moving from the associate degree to a Bachelor Degree in ECE or Education.

Questions 11, 12, and 15 provided some insight into the mindsets and practices of directors with regard to the professional development of their staff. Determining training needs was, in 72% of the cases, a shared decision between staff and director, whereas 21% of the directors reported they alone determined the training needs of their employees. When asked how they supported employee educational goals, 71% paid workshop fees, 55% provided career planning, 48% participated in SEEK scholarships, and 40% provided release time for educational efforts. “Participate in T.E.A.C.H.” was ranked lowest in the choices. If directors are providing career planning, and see it as a shared decision, they should be insisting their staff pursue T.E.A.C.H. scholarships for coursework related to career pathways supported by T.E.A.C.H. (CDA and AS degree pathways). Child care practitioners who are not utilizing this program are missing a worthwhile opportunity.

Directors most frequently answered they were motivated to invest in educated staffs (Q12) because of their beliefs that good staffs are best for children. The choice “knowledge or belief that educated teachers are best for children” was predictably popular, probably obvious, and perhaps politically correct. Selections of the other choices are more meaningful: nearly half of the respondents reported they are motivated to invest in better educated staffs because of parents’ demands. Licensing was a factor for 28% of the directors. The differences among the center types on these factors were not remarkable, although Faith-Based centers were less influenced by the 4-Star Quality Rating System than other types of centers.

The survey provided some direction to institutions of higher learning insofar as directors can accurately reflect the thoughts of their employees. In Question 13 center directors were asked to identify the extent to which, in their views, specific factors represented barriers that their staffs faced when participating in training. A review of the responses organized by center type did not reveal remarkable differences among the three center types. To summarize the responses, Table 5 lists the barriers, number, percent, and ranking of centers that considered the factor as a major barrier. It is important to note here that no definitions of major and minor were provided.

Table 5: Frequency, Percent, and Ranking of Barriers to staff participation in training considered “very important” (Q13)

Choice	Private, For-Profit		Faith-Based		Other		Total		
	#	%		%	#	%	#	%	Rank
Distance (time needed to travel to training)	13	44.8	7	50.0	5	29.4	25	41.7	5
Location (place/facility where training is held)	11	36.7	5	35.7	3	50.0	19	31.1	9
No substitutes to take the place of staff	10	33.3	3	23.1	3	17.6	16	26.7	10
Cost of training	10	51.6	4	33.3	6	37.5	20	33.3	8
Training does not increase earnings	16	51.6	7	58.3	9	56.3	32	54.2	2
Difficulty locating appropriate training	11	35.5	6	46.2	8	47.1	25	41.0	6
Inconvenient training times	12	38.7	3	23.1	6	35.3	21	34.4	7
Available training topics not relevant	12	40.0	6	46.2	9	100	27	45.8	4
Poor quality of training or poor trainer	13	43.3	5	41.7	9	56.3	27	46.6	3
Not knowing what education and training is available	17	56.7	8	57.1	10	66.7	35	58.3	1
Conflicts with family/home demands on staff	4	13.3	2	14.3	3	20.0	9	15.3	11

Directors most frequently ranked three major barriers to staff training: Not knowing what education and training is available (58%); training does not increase earnings (54%); poor quality of training or poor trainer (47%). Factors that were perceived as presenting no barrier to staff were conflicts with family/home demands on staff (49% felt this was no barrier); no substitutes to take the place of staff (48%), and location of the training (32%).

In Question 11 of the survey, 36 of the directors said they provided career planning to their staffs, but results in Question 13 about barriers indicates that 36 directors did not know what education and training was available, and 35 said it was difficult to locate appropriate training. This would make career coaching challenging, to say the least. That 27 directors

checked ‘very important’ to ‘poor quality of training or poor trainer’ and ‘available training topics not relevant’ is of great interest to training institutions. Interpretation of the responses to this question should be further explored. Later in this report the director responses are compared to the workforce responses.

The final three questions of the Director Survey looked at curriculum approaches. Question 19 asked about the approaches centers used, Question 20 asked about formal training received, and Question 21 asked about training interest in the approaches. The most common curriculum approaches used at the sites were the Creative Curriculum and High/Scope. Training in these two approaches was also most frequent. Six centers (9%) reported using Beyond Centers and Circle Time, but 32% indicated interest in training in this approach. DLM Early Childhood Express was used by one center, and The Doors to Discovery approach was not used by any center.

Program planners in higher education are most interested in Question 21 (Table 6). Even though High/ Scope was in use by 25% of the centers, more than 35% indicated interest in further training in this approach. There was minimal interest expressed in DLM Early Childhood Express, Doors to Discovery, or Wee Learn curriculums. The level of interest in approaches is somewhat different for the three center types, information that may be useful to educational institutions as they tailor training offerings to center types.

Table 6: Level of Interest in Training in Curriculum approaches for Directors and their Staffs Members (Q21)

Choice	Private, For-Profit		Faith-Based		Other		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Beyond Centers & Circle Time	9	28.1	5	33.3	6	33.3	20	32.3
DLM Early Childhood Express	2	6.3	0	0.0	1	5.6	3	4.6
High/Scope	11	34.4	5	33.3	7	38.9	23	36.9
Scholastic Early Childhood Program	5	15.6	3	20.0	2	11.1	10	0.0
Creative Curriculum, 4 th Ed.	9	28.1	5	33.3	7	38.9	21	7.7
Doors to Discovery	4	12.5	4	26.7	1	5.6	9	3.1
Montessori	8	25.0	1	6.7	3	16.7	12	0.0
Wee Learn	3	9.4	3	20.0	1	5.6	7	0.0

Key Findings

- The **T.E.A.C.H. Program** provides an opportunity for adult learners already working in the early education field to access educational opportunities and receive counseling, academic advising, resource and referral, and application assistance. Since the program began, there has been an 88% contract completion rate with more than 14,000 scholarships awarded in Florida (Goodman, 2005). Only 26% of directors responding to the survey participated in T.E.A.C.H. Because of T.E.A.C.H.’s success, however, continuous marketing of this program to early childhood professionals is strongly encouraged. Survey results indicate that centers in the Private, For Profit category more frequently report that they support T.E.A.C.H. scholarships. Directors in Faith-Based programs, particularly, must become familiar with this program.
- A recent report by the Economic Policy Institute reports that, only about 13% of early care educators in Florida have a four-year college degree (Herzenberg, 2005). The child care profession is demanding that their workforce become better qualified. Head Start, for example, has a mandate that one half of their employees have at least a bachelors degree, by 2010. This movement and others like it may explain the shared view of directors reporting in this sample regarding the importance of the AA, AS, and BA degrees. Generally, a high school diploma, work experience, college credits, and even the CDA were considered ‘not important’ to directors in over 50% of the cases when hiring entering new teachers. Yet, the CDA is an important step on the career ladder. Child care workers gain skills and knowledge for working in a child care setting, as well as pay increases. The survey results bear out the practice of pay increases at this benchmark; however, as stated above, the CDA is not an important credential to directors when hiring.

- Responses to the question about barriers to training (Q13) are helpful. In discussions with child care professionals in the county, there was a commonly held belief that the lack of substitutes to replace staff while they were attending training was a major barrier. The notion of creating a substitute pool has been on the table and CD2 was interested in organizing a scholarship program to fund substitutes so that caregivers could take advantage of professional development without detracting from the care given to children. The survey responses do not support ‘lack of substitutes’ as a barrier to training. Directors in 25 cases (42%) indicated that distance was a major barrier, but said that weekend classes would be acceptable to their staff (Q6). This implies that another day of travel, whether to take the class at their center or at another site, would work best for their staffs. Of course, weekend classes would negate the need for substitutes during the school day.

- Directors expressed concern that training was of poor quality, and that it was not relevant. The recent initiative to develop core competencies for early education practitioners (Pathways to Professionalism) will, in part, address this concern. Competencies will define what professionals need to know and do. They will be the basis for decisions and practices, and they will establish a set of standards for the profession. Individual professional development plans will be built around competencies, and all training will be targeted to the competencies. As this initiative unfolds in Palm Beach County, it will be essential to educate directors about the competencies so that they can effectively assist their workforce.

- In focus group meetings with directors, there was discussion about centralizing available training so that ‘shopping’ for training was simplified. This is consistent with the survey results that indicate lack of knowledge about training availability as a major barrier to training participation.

- The importance of developing a career ladder in the early education profession is widely shared. A major focus of CD2 is development of the Registry System Career Lattice. Materials developed by PBCC for marketing and recruiting purposes are built on this concept. These materials were shared in focus group meetings with center directors and responses were extremely positive. While it is disappointing that directors who responded to the Director Survey reported little interest in linking their training offerings to the career pathways of teachers (Q14), aggressive marketing of ‘Career Pathways in Child Development’ materials and the Registry will emphasize the important part directors play as they counsel staff in their career development.

5.0 WORKFORCE SURVEY

The overriding purpose of the Workforce Survey was to assess the professional development interests and goals of the early education workforce in Palm Beach County. It was comprised of 45 items including two open-ended questions. By the end of May, 749 surveys had been returned. Staff at PBCC coded the responses, and the Office of Research and Institutional Effectiveness completed the statistical analysis (Appendix C).

The sample of respondents to the Workforce Survey came from the centers that participated in the Director Survey sample. Distribution of the Workforce Survey was left in the hands of directors, and it is likely that various processes were used. Even though the accompanying letter to the survey was directed to teachers, some directors may have asked all employees to complete the survey, including clerical and custodial staff. In other cases, directors may have selected a subsets of their staffs to participate. As well, the process for survey completion may have occurred in varying environments, such as during a full staff meeting or in private.

Summary of the Results

A total of 749 usable Workforce Surveys were returned and are included in the analysis. Approximately 98% of the respondents were female; 40% were over 41 years of age; 44% were Caucasian, 25% were Hispanic, and 24% were African-American. Nearly 68% said they did not need child care (Q34).

Practitioners were employed in early childhood (97%) although 6% indicated they were employed, but not in early childhood. Seven respondents were students at PBCC and 23 were students at FAU. The majority of the sample (68%) were employed in child care centers; 24% in Faith-Based centers; 3% were in Head Start or Early Head Start. About 80% of respondents were lead teachers, associate teachers, or floaters (teachers); 13% said they were directors or assistant directors (Q3). About 10% of respondents had been working in the field for less than one year; 26% reported working in the field for 12 years or more. Twenty-four percent had been working for their present employer for less than one year and 11% for more than 12 years (Table 7).

Table 7: Longevity in the Job and in the Field, Frequency and Percent (Q27 and Q28)

	Working for present employer		Working in the field	
	#	%	#	%
Less than 6 months	92	13.5	41	6.0
6 - 12 months	68	10.0	25	3.7
1 - 3 years	186	27.3	133	19.6
3.1 – 5 years	105	15.4	98	14.0
5.1 – 8 years	94	13.8	109	16.0
8.1 - 12 years	68	10.0	97	14.3
12.1 - 16 years	31	4.5	67	9.9
More than 16 years	38	5.6	110	16.2

Question 4 asked about educational background: approximately 85% indicated that they had a high school diploma; 77% reported having the 40-hour certificate; 48% had the CDA Equivalent, and 15% held the CDA National. Twelve percent of respondents had an associate’s degree and 18% held a bachelor’s degree. Of total respondents, 18% said they were educated outside of the United States (Q23).

The survey looked at wages and benefits of the sampled workforce. Sixty-three percent had a 40-hour work week; 3% reported working less than 20 hours. When asked about benefits received at work (Q32), 55% had paid sick days, 71% received paid vacation days, and 76% received paid holidays. In Question 34, 18% of respondents indicated that the employer paid all, or part, of their child care costs. Table 8 presents information about medical insurance for workforce respondents: over 1/3 have none despite the fact that 63% of the respondents work a 40-hour week. Earnings of respondents are presented in Table 9. Since ranges were reported, no median can be established. One does see, however, that about half the respondents earned \$9 or less per hour, and half earned over \$9 per hour. Twelve percent of the respondents said they had a second job (Q44).

Table 8: Frequency and Percent of Responses about Medical Insurance (Q33)

	#	%
Medicaid	49	7.6
Private insurance that I pay for	96	15.0
Employer pays part or all of the cost	189	29.2
KidCare for my children	40	6.3
Covered by spouse's policy	139	21.7
None	203	31.4

Table 9: Frequency and Percent of Responses about Hourly Pay (Q30)

	#	%
\$5.15- \$5.99	5	.8
\$6.00-\$7.50	97	14.9
\$7.51-\$9.00	218	33.5
\$9.01-\$10.50	135	20.7
\$10.51-\$12.00	77	11.8
\$12.01-\$13.50	43	6.6
\$13.51-\$15.00	32	4.9
\$15.01-\$16.50	22	3.4

Three questions addressed 'big picture' plans (Q29, Q5, Q6). When asked how long they expected to remain in the field, 7% said less than one year, and 31% said more than 16 years; 16% said 1 to 3 years, and 13% said 3 to 5 years.

Respondents were asked to select one immediate education goal that best reflected their ambitions: 30% had no immediate goal; 20% indicated the CDA Equivalent or National; 18% selected the associate's degree. Seven percent selected a bachelor's degree as their immediate goal and 3% chose the master's degree. One percent said their immediate goal was ESOL. Respondents could select as many as applied when responding to the long-term goal question (Q6). Table 10 illustrates the ambitions of the sample: 16% and 14%, respectively, hope to earn a bachelor's or master's degree in the field.

Table 10: Long-term Educational Goals of Workforce Respondents (Q6)

	#	%
I have no long-term education goal	227	32.9
High School diploma/GED	18	2.7
40-hour certificate	22	3.3
CDA Equivalent	53	8.0
CDA National	57	8.6
Florida Director Foundational	22	3.3
Florida Director Advanced	24	3.6
Associate of Science in early childhood field	49	7.4
Associate of Science in non-early childhood field	28	4.2
Associate of Arts	36	5.4
Bachelor's degree in non-early childhood field	40	6.1
Bachelor's degree in early childhood field	108	16.3
Master's degree in non-early childhood field	39	5.9
Master's degree in early childhood field	92	13.9
Florida teaching certificate with specialization	41	6.2

When asked what areas they were interested in studying (Q7), interest in Preschool (ages 3 to 5) was most frequently selected. Early Childhood (birth to 5) was second. There were 115 individuals interested in Children with Special Needs and 164 individuals indicated interest in Infants-Toddlers (Table 11).

Table 11: Frequency, Percent, and Ranking to Responses to: The area(s) of early childhood education I am interested in studying: check all that apply (Q7)

	#	%	Rank
Infants-Toddlers (Birth - 3)	166	25.1	3
Early Childhood (Birth - 5)	205	31.3	2
School Age (Out of school)	56	8.6	8
Elementary including Pre-K	153	23.4	4
Teaching Certificate	122	18.7	6
Preschool (3 – 5)	225	34.5	1
Children with special needs/disabilities	115	17.7	7
Child Care Center Management	136	20.9	5

When individuals indicated their interest in receiving training in a list of curricular approaches, the top four (from the list of 8 approaches) were: High/Scope (171 responses), Creative Curriculum (165 responses), Beyond Centers & Circle Time (160 responses), and Scholastic Early Childhood Program (152 responses). By comparison, Montessori, Doors to Discovery, DLM Early Childhood Express, and Wee Learn were of less interest to the respondents. When asked what curricular approaches they currently used in their classrooms, 40% of the respondents indicated that they used Creative Curriculum; 24% said they used High/Scope. Still, there was interest in further training in these approaches.

A major purpose of the Workforce Survey was to explore the preferences of the child care workforce with regard to professional development. Several factors were studied. About 72% preferred evening classes, and 42% said weekend classes would be acceptable (Q14). Approximately 69% of respondents indicated they would need full financial aid in order to continue their education. To pay for their education, the financial sources were ranked as follows: SEEK scholarship, my own funds, TEACH scholarship, Loans, PELL grant, and employer funding (Table 12).

Table 12: Frequency, Percent, and Ranking of Sources of Funding for Education (Q12)

	#	%	Rank
My own funds	227	35.9	2
PELL grant	150	23.0	4
TEACH scholarship	169	26.7	3
Loans	141	22.2	5
Employer funding	114	18.1	6
Palm Beach SEEK scholarship	238	44.0	1

Also of interest are the barriers faced by the workforce. Question 35 asked them to check factors that currently prevented them from acquiring further education. The top four barriers were ‘lack of sufficient fund,’ ‘lack of personal time,’ ‘classes not available at times I can attend,’ and ‘no incentives in terms of pay and promotions’ (Table 13).

Table 13: Frequency, Percent, and Ranking of Responses to: What factors currently prevent you from acquiring further education in the Early Childhood Education area? check all that apply (Q35)

	#	%	Rank
Not fluent in English	41	7.2	8
Lack of sufficient funds	226	40.1	1
Classes not available at location I can attend	76	13.7	6
Lack of computer skills	61	11.0	7
Lack of personal time	204	36.6	2
Health issues	23	4.2	12
Lack of transportation to off-site classes	38	6.8	9
Classes not available at times I can attend	110	19.7	3
Difficulty in getting information about educational opportunities	37	6.6	11
Lack of access to a computer	38	6.8	9
No incentives in terms of pay and promotions	89	15.9	4
Family issues	80	14.3	5

About 73% of the respondents said they had access to a computer, and 78% said online courses would be an acceptable option for them (Q36). When asked if they had reliable transportation to educational classes, nearly 93% of the respondents indicated that they did. To get information about educational opportunities, respondents most frequently indicated they used these strategies: website, visiting or calling the school, or speaking with their site supervisor. Twenty-two percent of respondents had not tried to get information. Four percent said they called Family Central, and 8% said they had talked with their QRS career advisor (Q19).

What motivates the workforce to continue their education? Table 14 details the results. Most frequently respondents said they believed their earnings would cover their training costs (60%) and 35% said they would receive a raise with more education. If they could be assured a raise or bonus, 41% of the respondents would be inspired to continue their education. This was supported with responses to the question “Additional education would provide” (Q25) where 75% of the respondents indicated ‘increased pay’. Other popular choices in item 25 were ‘the skills to make me a better teacher’ (59%), and job security (48%). Receiving college credit for training and workshops (Q17) appears also to be a factor in seeking additional education.

Table 14: Responses to Question 26 (What would inspire or motivate you to continue your education? check all that apply)

	#	%
I believe increased earnings in the future would cover my investment in education	414	59.8
I would be much more likely to seek additional education if I were assured a raise or a bonus	282	41.0
I believe I would receive a substantial bonus from the TEACH scholarship program or the Palm Beach SEEK program if I got more education	175	25.5
I believe I would receive a substantial raise from my employer if I got more education	239	34.8
I would plan to get a different job if I got more education	152	22.2

Key Findings

- Results showed that 40% of the respondents were over 41 years of age, and 68% needed no child care. Almost 31% expected to remain in the field for more than 16 years. One might think that this is a perfect opportunity for this subset of the child care workforce to return to school ,yet 30% of the respondents had no immediate educational goal and 33% had no long-term educational goal. If the highest ranked barrier to continued education could be removed (cost), and if delivery systems were suited to the needs of the workforce, would these practitioners pursue the opportunities? Encouraging is the fact that 48% of respondents said they needed career advising.
- Respondents in the workforce sample appear to be less familiar with technology than respondents in the Director and Family Child Care Surveys. Just over half said they had good computer skills although 73% had access to a computer. To seek information about education and training opportunities, 40% went to a website. For 22% of the sample, taking an online class was not an option. Though the majority might be comfortable with technologies associated with distance learning, a substantial number of workforce customers are not. In the focus group for teachers held in August, one suggestion was that a hands-on computer skills workshop would be helpful to teachers who anticipate taking online courses (Appendix A).
- One motivation for entering the early care profession is that child care costs for one’s own children are often a benefit, but that may not be a motivating factor for staying in the field. Forty percent of the sample depicted here were over age 4,1 and 68% needed no child care. Over 70% had been working in the field more than 3 years. While wages and benefits are inconsistent with the importance of the work, the veteran practitioners, at least in this sample, seem committed to their jobs.
- A cursory comparison was made between some of the data on the Workforce survey and statistics presented in the 2004 Education and Training Needs Analysis (Steele). The directors responding in 2004 were from centers participating in the 4-Star Quality Rating System, and they were responding about their staffs. There are no glaring discrepancies in the two sets of information and, although they should be compared with caution, they provide evidence of the validity of the Workforce Survey results.

<i>QRS DIRECTORS SAID...</i>	<i>THE WORKFORCE SAID...</i>
42% of their full time staff were Lead Teachers	44% were Lead Teachers
40% of their full time staff were Associate Teachers	32% were Associate Teachers
22% of their staff had been employed less than 6 months	14% had been working for employer for less than 6 months
19% of their staff had the CDA National	15% had the CDA National
41% of their staff had the CDA Equivalency	48% had the CDA Equivalent
75% of their staff spoke English as their primary language	80% had been educated in the US

- For 22% of respondents, earning a bachelor's degree was a long term goal, and 20% hoped to earn a master's degree. While there is likely some overlap in the results, since the survey permitted respondents to check all answers that applied, and while more exploration is needed, these results are encouraging. FAU and PBCC should continue articulation discussions about the BAEC and the BECE programs related to early childhood.

6.0 FAMILY CHILD CARE SURVEY

The Family Child Care Survey was mailed to 120 homes, and returns were received from 36 respondents (30%). The purposes of the survey were to learn more about this population, particularly with regard to their professional development needs. Survey questions were similar to the Workforce Survey, but customized for family child care providers. The 53-question survey was lengthy, but easy to complete. The survey introduction encouraged participation in the needs assessment effort by acknowledging the importance of provider involvement in local initiatives, reinforcing the ‘get involved’ idea, and inviting comments.

Appendix D contains the statistical results in their entirety. The summary below provides an overview of the results; the survey questions were organized into logical groupings to simplify the presentation. The results provide useful information for PBCC, FAU, agencies and organizations as they plan for changes to improve the quality of family child care in the county.

Summary of the Results

All of the 36 respondents in the Family Day Care Center sample were female; 11% were ages 26-33 and 67% were over 41; 66% were African-American, 29% were Caucasian, and 6% were Hispanic. All respondents had good or excellent English skills, and only one was educated outside of the United States. Since the survey was in English, Hispanics with limited English skills may not have responded.

Most (95%) of those responding were owners/operators of small family child care programs. About half of the sample had an assistant provider and half reported having a co-provider (Q44, Q45). It appeared that most of the respondents ran full-time programs, with 86% serving children ages 12 to 35 months, 47% providing infant care (0 to 11 months), 14 % reporting serving children ages 6 to 12 years. On a part time basis, 33% of the respondents served children ages 6 to 12 years. Seven respondents cared for children with disabilities; one said she received outside support for this population. When asked their reasons for opening a family child care program (Q43), 81% of respondents indicated they wanted their own business (Table 15). Ranking second (58% or 21) was the response, “I wanted to stay home with my own children”.

Table 15: Frequency, Percent and Ranking to: Why did you decide to open a family child care program in your home? Check all that apply (Q43)

	#	%	Rank
I wanted to stay home with my own children.	21	58.3	2
I wanted to stay home with my own grandchildren or other relative children.	6	16.7	6
I needed additional income for my family’s survival.	19	52.8	3
I wanted additional household income beyond my family’s basic needs.	11	30.6	5
I wanted to own my own business.	29	80.6	1
I intentionally chose early education as my profession.	18	50.0	4

Six respondents (15%) had worked as family child care providers for 3 years or less, 49% from 3 to 8 years, and 44% for over 8 years. Thirteen percent reported they had been in the early childhood field for 3 years or less; 37% for 3 to 8 years, and 50% for 8 years or more (Q25, Q26). Answers to Question 2 on the survey indicated that 94% had the Family Child Care Certificate (required before operating a family child care home); 42% had the CDA equivalent, 19% had the Florida Director’s Credential, and 9% had a Bachelor’s degree (Table 16). In a recent Economic Policy Institute Issue Brief Herzenberg (2005) reported, “according to the Census, only 10% of Florida home-based ECE workers in 2000 had a college degree or more.” In this sample, 9 respondents earned the associate’s degree; 3 held a bachelor’s degree, and one held a master’s degree. If these responses are unduplicated, 13 or 27% of this sample held a college degree.

Table 16: Results to: My education includes: check all that apply (Q2)

	#	%
High School Diploma or GED	35	97.2
30—hour Family Child Care Certificate	34	94.4
CDA Equivalent	15	41.7
National CDA—Family Child Care	6	16.7
National CDA—Infant/Toddler	5	13.9
National CDA—Pre-School	3	8.3
National CDA— School Age	2	5.6
Florida Director’s Credential—Foundation	6	16.7
Florida Director’s Credential—Advanced	1	2.8
ESOL	0	0
Associate of Science in early childhood	4	11.1
Associate of Science in non-early childhood	2	5.6
Associate of Arts	3	8.3
Bachelor’s degree in non-early childhood field	3	8.8
Bachelor’s degree in early childhood field	0	0
Master’s degree in non-early childhood field	1	2.8
Master’s degree in early childhood field	0	0
Florida teaching certification with specialization in _____	1	2.8

The survey explored income and benefits. Reporting annual income (Q28), 25% earned \$15,000 or less; 30% earned between \$15,000 and \$25,000, 25% earned over \$25,000. One person worked 25 to 29 hours per week, another respondent worked 35-39 hours; four (11%) worked a 40-hour week. All other respondents worked over 40 hours per week. Twelve of those (33% of the total respondents) worked more than 51 hours per week (Q29). While 84% of the respondents said they had one child or more, only 16% (5) said their children under age 13 participated in their program. Asked about benefits, 19% of respondents had paid sick days; 36% had paid vacation days and/or professional development days; and 61% had paid holidays. Table 17 presents the results to Question 31 about insurance coverage. Most frequently, respondents indicated they/their program had Auto Insurance Liability. Ranking second was Life Insurance.

Table 17: Frequency, Percent, and Ranking, Question 31 (I have the following insurance coverage: check all that apply)

	#	%	Rank
Business Liability Insurance	18	50.0	3
Homeowners/Renters Insurance	16	44.4	4
KidCare for my children	6	16.7	7
Dental insurance	12	33.3	6
Group health insurance policy from spouse or other family member	15	41.7	5
Auto Insurance Liability	23	63.9	1
Medicaid	1	2.8	9
Private health insurance I pay for myself	6	16.7	7
Life insurance	21	58.3	2

Several questions on the survey were aimed at learning more about the ambitions and educational interests of family day care providers. Questions 3 and 4 asked about short and long term goals. Respondents were asked to select one short term goal. Seven (20%) replied they had no immediate educational goal. Nine (26%) selected the Associate of Science in Early Childhood while the remaining responses covered the range. When asked about long term goals, respondents could select as many responses as applied. Results are presented in Table 18.

Table 18: Responses to: My long-term (your highest or ultimate) educational goal is to complete: Check all that apply (Q4)

	#	%
I have no long term education goals	5	14.3
High School diploma/GED	0	0
30-hour Family Child Care Certificate	0	0
CDA Equivalent	2	5.6
National CDA-Family Child Care	6	16.7
National CDA-Infant/Toddler	2	5.6
National CDA-Pre School	1	2.8
National CDA-School Age	0	0
Florida Director Credential-Foundational	5	13.9
Florida Director Credential-Advanced	3	8.3
ESOL	1	2.8
Associate of Science in early childhood	6	16.7
Associate of Science in non-early childhood	0	0
Associate of Arts	1	2.8
Bachelor's degree in non-early childhood field	0	0
Bachelor's degree in early childhood field	11	30.6
Master's degree in non-early childhood field	0	0
Master's degree in early childhood field	8	22.2
Florida teaching certificate with specialization	0	0

A number of questions will help PBCC and FAU as they plan offerings for family day care providers. Question 5 asked which areas of early childhood providers would be interested in studying. Ranked most frequently was the Infant/Toddler area (19 or 53%). This seems consistent with the increasing need for infant and toddler care in Palm Beach County. Results to Questions 6, 7, and 8 about curriculum approaches are provided in Table 19. In Question 52, a thorough list of training topics was supplied and respondents were asked to indicate their interest. The topics that were interesting to at least 12 (1/3 of the respondents) are listed in Table 20.

Table 19: Comparison of Responses to Curriculum Approaches Questions (Q6, Q7, Q8)

Curriculum Choices	Currently Use (Q6)		Received Formal Training (Q7)		Have Training Interest (Q8)		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	Rank
None			19	55.9	5	15.2	6
Beyond Centers & Circle Time	6	17.1	4	11.8	9	27.3	2
DLM Early Childhood Express	1	2.9	1	2.9	1	3.0	10
High/Scope	4	11.4	5	14.7	9	27.3	3
Scholastic Early Childhood Express	5	14.3	2	5.9	6	18.2	4
Creative Curriculum	15	42.9	11	32.4	10	30.3	1
Doors to Discovery	2	5.7	2	5.9	6	18.2	4
Montessori	2	5.7	1	2.9	3	9.1	7
Wee Learn	2	5.7	1	2.9	3	9.1	7
Other	6	17.1	2	5.9	2	6.0	9

Table 20: Training Topics of Interest to 12 or more Respondents (Q52)

Training Topic	#	%
Mixed Age Group Activities	20	55.6
Curriculum Development	17	47.2
Curriculum Planning	16	44.4
Multicultural Activities	14	38.9
Reading/Literacy Activities	14	38.9
Taxes and Record Keeping Business Necessities: Contracts, Policies, Marketing	13	36.1
Calming/Relaxation Techniques	13	36.1

To continue their education (Question 9), 88% said they would need full financial aid (though, in Question 10, 29% planned to use their own funds for their education). The SEEK scholarship as a vehicle to pay for education was selected by 21 participants, and 17 selected T.E.A.C.H. Most indicated that part-time classes were preferable to full-time and the most popular times for classes were evening and weekends. In Question 13, 53% indicated that on-line or web-based classes would be a preferred 'location' even though, in Question 45, 86% said online or computer assisted courses would be an option. (All respondents had access to a computer, but skill levels varied, Q39.) Taking classes at Palm Beach Community College was more popular than at Florida Atlantic University. Transportation to classes was not a problem for 94% of the respondents, and 97% agreed they would be more likely to take courses if they yielded college credit.

This survey sought information about how this population envisioned their future in the field of early education. The majority of respondents (80%) expected to work in the field for 5 years or more, and 46% said 'more than 16 years.' Responses to Question 51 seem to support the intentions of this sample group, at least, to remain in the profession (Table 21), implying that many providers view their work as a career.

Table 21: Frequency, Percent and Ranking to: My future plans are: check all that apply (Q51)

	#	%	Rank
To return to my former career (the one I had prior to opening my family child care program) as soon as my children/grandchildren/relative children go to school	0	0	
To continue my career as a family child care provider indefinitely.	24	66.7	1
To become a large family child care program.	17	47.2	3
To eventually own my own commercial child care center.	11	30.6	4
To start/continue my college education in early childhood or related field.	20	55.6	2
To start/continue my college education outside of early childhood or related field.	2	6.1	5

Question 53 asked family childcare providers to rate the importance of a list of benefits to their continued involvement in the field. The results of this question are included here in their entirety (Table 22). Although respondents believe that higher income is connected to more education (Q23) and although they would be encouraged to continue their education if funds for schooling were available (Q24), none of the respondents said that higher income was important to their longevity in the field and only two said grants/scholarships were very important. Even health insurance or retirement programs were considered 'not important' factors for 81% and 78% of the respondents, respectively.

Table 22: Responses to: How important are the following benefits to your continued involvement in the early care and education field? (Q53)

Benefit	Very Important		Somewhat Important		Not Important	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Higher Income	0	0	5	13.9	31	86.1
Health Insurance	5	13.9	2	5.6	29	80.6
Reliable Sub Care	6	18.2	8	24.4	19	57.6
More family support	8	24.2	9	27.3	16	48.5
Shorter hours	10	30.3	12	36.4	11	33.3
Retirement Program	2	5.6	6	16.7	28	77.8
Enhanced Training	2	6.3	10	31.3	20	62.5
Less Regulations	7	22.6	15	48.4	9	29.0
Peer Mentoring	6	20.0	18	60.0	6	20.0
Support Staff Visits	8	25.8	15	48.4	8	25.0
Peer Support Group	9	28.1	15	46.8	8	25.0
Enhanced Career Path	6	20.0	11	36.7	13	43.3
Grants/Scholarships	2	6.1	3	9.1	28	84.9
Toy Lending Library	4	12.5	11	34.4	17	53.1

Longevity in early education is not enough. To encourage a highly trained workforce, an understanding of barriers to continued education and training is essential for institutions of higher education. Questions 23, 24, 33, and 53 addressed this. When asked what would inspire them to continue their education (Q24), respondents most frequently pointed to increased earnings, at least to cover the cost of the financial investment. It is important to note that 28% (10) said they would be motivated to continue their education if they would be able to get a job outside of child care. Providers in the sample believed (Q23) first that additional education would make them more effective teachers and second that additional education would increase their pay. These top two choices were followed by the belief that additional education would provide them the ability to open their own centers (Table 23).

Table 23: Frequency, Percent, and Rank to: I believe that additional education would provide: check all that apply (Q23)

	#	%	Rank
Increased pay	26	72.2	2
Ability to open a large family child care business	22	61.1	3
Opportunity to teach in the public school system	20	55.6	4
The skills to make me a better parent	16	44.4	7
Business security	19	52.8	5
Ability to open my own child care business	19	52.8	5
Opportunity to become a Director or administrator	14	38.9	8
The skills to make me a more effective teacher	20	80.6	1

When asked what factors prevent them from further education, the issue of funds was of prime concern. Reasons of “personal time,” along with “classes not available at times I can attend” tied for second. Results in Table 24 help to rule out some barriers and should help decision makers.

Table 24: Frequency, Percent, and Rank to: Factors that currently prevent me from acquiring further education in the Early Childhood Education area are: check all that apply) (Q33)

	#	%	Rank
Not fluent in English	0	0	0
Lack of sufficient funds	17	47.2	1
Classes not available at location I can attend	8	22.2	4
Lack of computer skills	5	13.9	5
Lack of personal time	12	33.3	2
Health issues	1	2.8	9
Lack of transportation to off-site classes	1	2.8	9
Classes not available at times I can attend	12	33.3	2
Difficulty in getting information about educational opportunities	2	5.6	7
Lack of access to a computer	0	0	0
No incentives in terms of pay and promotions	2	5.6	7
Family issues	4	11.1	6

Key Findings

- Survey results reveal a number of clues that suggest respondents plan to remain in family child care. When asked why they opened their program, 80% wished to own their own business and 50% said they intentionally chose early education as their profession (Q43). Over 80% planned to work in the field for 5 or more years, 46% for more than 16 years (Q27). Over 66%, responding to the question about future plans said they wished to continue their career in family child care indefinitely. While family child care providers are typically motivated to open a program because they want to stay home with their children, many of the respondents have found satisfaction over the long haul as indicated by only 15% reporting they had children of their own who participated in their program.
- It is difficult to know if respondents are keen on continued education and training. Although 56% said they planned to start or continue their college education in early childhood, ‘lack of personal time’ was ranked second among the factors that prevent family day care providers from acquiring further education. With 24 of the 36 respondents saying they worked 46 hours or more per week, spare time is rare. Over 50% of the respondents had not received any formal training in the listed curriculum approaches, and 15% said ‘none’ when asked what approaches interested them. In contrast, the topics of Curriculum Development and Curriculum Planning were ranked second and third in popularity (after Mixed Age Group Activities).
- Given the enormous time demands on family child care providers, online or computer-assisted courses may be an answer. For 86%, this vehicle is an option; all had access to a computer, and 92% had internet access. This would also accommodate the wide-spread interest over the 27 training topics presented (Q52), as well as the larger areas of interest (Q5).
- For 22 of the respondents, fewer regulations to operate their centers might encourage continued involvement in the field (Q53). In fact, standards in early care and education are becoming more stringent, and perhaps more complicated. Operators of family child care homes in Palm Beach County are required to be licensed. In addition, those wishing to participate in Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Program are required to hold a Foundation Level Director Credential. Six respondents in the survey said they had the Foundation Level Director Credential, one had the Advanced Credential, and one had Florida teaching certification (the teaching certificate meets the requirement). Even if these answers/choices are unduplicated, eight of the respondents (of the 34 in the sample who were owner/operators) hold the necessary credential. Maintaining standards is time-consuming, raising them is essential. Providers need help to find a way to manage.

7.0 COMPARISONS ACROSS SURVEYS

There were some common questions in the three surveys that bear exploration. Since the questions were not identical, statistical tests were not applied to the results.

While the needs assessment project was conducted by stakeholders from various early care and education sectors in Palm Beach County, PBCC had an interest in the experiences of any respondents who were, or had been, students at the college. Question 20 on the Workforce Survey and Question 18 on the Family Child Care Survey asked those who had tried to enroll or who have enrolled at PBCC to rate their experience in five areas: registration, admissions, counseling, buying books, and financial aid. Noteworthy is that 28 (77%) of the family child care respondents and 510 (68%) of the workforce respondents answered the question, implying they have had enrollment experience at PBCC (see Appendix C and D). This subset of respondents, by and large, is not experiencing trouble in these areas. On average, 87% of family child care owners/operators and 72% of workforce respondents selected ‘no difficulty’ at PBCC (Table 25).

That being said, for 15% of the workforce respondents, financial aid issues were of ‘great difficulty’, and for 9% counseling issues were of ‘great difficulty’. The follow up question asked respondents to expand on any enrollment problems at PBCC. A content analysis of the responses is beyond the scope of this report, but stakeholders are encouraged to study these. There were over 100 comments that will help PBCC improve services in the areas of registration, admissions, counseling, books, and financial aid.

Table 25: Comparison of Family Child Care Sample and Workforce Sample responding “No Difficulty” and “Great Difficulty” to the question: “If you have tried to enroll (or have enrolled at PBCC), please rate the extent to which you experienced difficulty in the following areas”

	% No Difficulty		% Great Difficulty	
	Family Child Care	Workforce	Family Child Care	Workforce
Registration	87.1	68.4	6.5	7.8
Admissions	93.3	76.6	3.3	5.1
Counseling	95.8	71.6	0	9.4
Buying Books	73.1	78.2	3.9	5.7
Financial Aid	86.4	63.7	0	15.2

There were interesting results among the three groups when responding to the question about acceptable times of classes. All agreed (over 70% in each group) that evening classes after 6 pm would be suitable. Weekday classes or evenings before 6 pm were not popular in any sample. Only 42% of the workforce respondents selected weekend classes as compared to 64% and 71% of the other sample groups, and on-line classes were selected by only 19% of the workforce versus 53% and 63% of the family child care and the director sample groups.

The Lake Worth campus of PBCC was selected by 58% of workforce respondents as the preferred location of classes compared to 39% of Family Child Care respondents. The Belle Glade campus was selected by 33% of family child care sample and by 8% of the workforce sample.

The Family Child Care and Workforce Survey respondents appear primed for career coaching, with 38% and 48% affirming they needed career advising. This is supported by the next question on the survey: 83% of the family child care sample and 73% of the workforce sample sought information about further education using one or more of the methods offered in the question choices. The choice of ‘Calling Family Central’ was selected by 34% of the family child care providers compared to 4% in the workforce. About equally, visiting a website was selected by 40% of the respondents. ‘Talking with my Quality Rating System career advisor’ was selected by about 8% of respondents, in both surveys.

Generally, respondents were most interested in further studying these curriculum approaches: High/Scope, Creative Curriculum, and Beyond Centers & Circle Time. Family child care providers and workforce respondents both expressed interest in Scholastic Early Childhood Express and in Montessori, but no directors indicated interest in either of these approaches.

Increasingly, early childhood teachers are working with children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Teachers themselves are more likely than ever before to speak a language other than English as their primary language. The topic of language as a barrier to career development for the early care and education workforce is important to stakeholders in Palm Beach County (Moreno, 2004). The results to several questions on the surveys provide information that can contribute to continued discussions on this topic. In the workforce sample, 25% of respondents were Hispanic; 18% were educated in another country; 7% said they were not fluent in English (a factor to acquiring further education), 10% said they preferred classes be conducted in Spanish. Eight respondents said ESOL was their immediate educational goal; 23 judged their spoken English to be low or very low and 27 said their ability to read and write English was low or very low. Analysis of the responses to Question 24 and a cursory review of the responses to the open-ended question about enrolling at PBCC (Q21) hold additional clues about the challenges faced by the child care workforce with language barriers. These data should be explored in detail and in the context of existing and planned curricular course offerings by PBCC and other institutions.

In all three surveys, there was a question about barriers to further education. The question in the Family Child Care and Workforce Surveys was identical (Table 26). Respondents in both groups ranked ‘lack of sufficient funds’ most frequently and ‘lack of personal time’ and ‘classes not available at times I can attend’ in second and third positions. Fluency in English and lack of computer access were not selected by any respondents in the family child care sample, but they were considered barriers to about 7% of the workforce sample and ranked toward the bottom.

Directors were not asked the identical question, but Question 13 on their survey asked them to rate barriers that impact the participation of their staff in training (see Table). Ranked first for directors was ‘not knowing what education and training is available’ and ranked second was ‘training does not increase earnings.’ To the extent that the choices/factors can be aligned, directors and the workforce have different opinions: ‘cost of training’ was ranked 8th as a major barrier by directors but ranked first (‘lack of funds’) by their workforce. For the workforce, ‘difficulty in getting information’ was selected as a barrier by only 7% of the respondents, but directors believed this to be a major barrier. While (on average) only 12% of the respondents in the family child care sample and 14% in the workforce sample said ‘family issues’ were a barrier to continued education, it still ranked 5th or 6th among the 11 barrier choices. Directors, in contrast, ranked ‘conflicts with family/home demands on staff’ (a similar choice) last. There seems to be a misunderstanding between directors of child care centers and their employees.

Table 26: Comparison of Family Child Care Provider and Workforce Responses to “Factors that currently prevent me from acquiring further education in the Early Childhood Education area are: (check all that apply)”

Choices	Family Child Care		Workforce	
	%	Rank	Rank	%
Not fluent in English	0	11	8	7.2
Lack of sufficient funds	47.2	1	1	40.1
Classes not available at location I can attend	22.2	4	6	13.7
Lack of computer skills	13.9	5	7	11.0
Lack of personal time	33.3	2	2	36.6
Health issues	2.8	9	12	4.2
Lack of transportation to off-site classes	2.8	9	9	6.8
Classes not available at times I can attend	33.3	2	3	19.7
Difficulty in getting information about educational opportunities	5.6	7	11	6.6
Lack of access to a computer	0	11	9	6.8
No incentives in terms of pay and promotions	5.6	7	4	15.9
Family issues	11.1	6	5	14.3

Family Child Care Survey respondents and Workforce Survey respondents answered affirmative when asked if on-line classes would be an option for them (88% and 78% respectively). In a separate question about preferred location of classes, however, only 20% of the workforce selected on-line classes versus 53% of the family child care respondents. Interestingly, 63% of directors said that on-line classes would be acceptable to their staff (Q16). The sample of workforce respondents consisted of the staff members of these directors, and again there are differences between what the workforce expresses, and what directors believe about their employees.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Study the subset of respondents to the Workforce Survey who are teachers (lead teacher, associate teacher, or floater). The Workforce Survey was designed for this group, and it represents the majority of the respondents.
2. Complete a content analysis of the responses to open ended questions on the surveys. In addition, review the comments of respondents when they were asked to specify their answers when 'other' was selected as an answer. The data may be meaningful, and this analysis could help refine questions for future surveys.
3. Utilize the survey results about the Hispanic population in conversations about the early care and education workforce who speak English as a Second Language.
4. Improve the awareness among all levels of the workforce about the T.E.A.C.H. program and the SEEK scholarships. Streamline efforts to assist the workforce in their efforts to acquire financial assistance.
5. Educate the workforce, especially center directors, about career pathways in early care and education. Help them understand the importance of a professional development plan. Explain Florida's Pathways to Professionalism initiative at every opportunity.
6. Create forums for safe discussions between program directors and their employees, especially in the areas where there are apparent misconceptions and disconnects. Survey results point to the need for conversations about barriers to further education, salaries and benefits, long-term goals, and specific training interests.
7. Explore the relationship between wages, bonuses, benefits, and educational credentials. At the same time, move the conversation toward competencies and outcomes.

And Finally

It takes evidence-based information to build effective programs. This needs assessment adds to the existing knowledge about the early care and education workforce in Palm Beach County. Sincere appreciation is extended to all stakeholders in the county who cooperated to make this effort a successful one.

Moving the profession, its practitioners, and its leadership forward is a difficult and continual challenge.. The on-going process of gathering information, analyzing trends, exploring solutions, streamlining services, and thinking creatively will contribute to raising standards in early care facilities and to building the skills and talents of the workforce.

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