



# Who is the Florida T.E.A.C.H. Program Serving?

A Technical Brief

**E**arly childhood teachers are tasked with a tremendous responsibility of caring for and educating Florida's children. The unfortunate reality is that child care employment offers low wages, few job benefits, and limited opportunities for professional advancement<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, researchers have documented that turnover in child care centers far exceeds that of other teaching settings, given that there is a 30% average rate of departure from child care jobs each year<sup>2</sup>. A stable, well-trained workforce is critical to improving quality in early care and education settings for all children and mounting evidence strongly suggests that this quality is tied to the wages, education and retention of teachers<sup>3</sup>.

One method of professional development that has been proven effective for teachers is the opportunity to enter/reenter institutions of higher education, earn degrees and/or certifications, receive financial compensation and reward for success with bonuses for committing to their workplace. By linking compensation and professional development through the workplace, turnover is minimal. The Florida T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program assists child care professionals across the state from various family and cultural backgrounds that need support in reaching their educational goals.

This technical brief presents selected research findings from a longitudinal investigation of Florida T.E.A.C.H. recipients. The findings include descriptive information pertaining to selected personal and professional demographic characteristics of those who have received T.E.A.C.H. educational scholarships over four consecutive years including age trends, family backgrounds, employment settings, and educational track trends. Results indicate that those comprising the Florida early care and education workforce are similar to the "national workforce that is made up of women who are older than typical college students; who are working full-time; and who are often trying to balance family responsibilities with work and attending school"<sup>4</sup>.

## TEACHER COMPENSATION AND EDUCATION HELPS (T.E.A.C.H.)

### Early Childhood® Scholarship Program

According to researchers, programs that provide financial support to early childhood teachers are instrumental in increasing education levels and reducing turnover, and therefore could be a viable way to improve program quality<sup>3</sup>. Currently there are few programs in Florida designed to address teacher compensation at varying levels, and therefore promote a more stable workforce. One such program is the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program, which is geared to individuals already working in the early care and education field in centers or family child care homes. Program goals include increased opportunities for early childhood teachers to earn degrees, receive higher salaries, and enhance their knowledge about how young children learn and develop. By compensating and supporting workers for receiving more training and education, the

program strives to retain early childhood teachers in the field and to improve the quality of the child care workforce overall.

To ensure that early childhood teachers have maximum access to the opportunities provided by T.E.A.C.H., the process involves the sharing of expenses. The program's unique design distributes the burdens of paying for college and the effort it takes to stay in the educational system across the teacher receiving the scholarship; the sponsoring child care center, and the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program. Across the nation, 23 states operate T.E.A.C.H. programs with funds coming from federal, state, and private sources. Regardless of funding streams, there are four core components that set the T.E.A.C.H. model program apart from others and tie each of the 23 uniquely operating programs in the country together. The four core components are scholarship, education, compensation and commitment. These components become important when remembering that returning to school is no easy matter considering the costs, time, balancing acts between work, family, and school, and the necessary supports required for the success of any student.

## PRACTICAL TRANSLATIONS OF THE FOUR COMPONENTS FOR STUDENTS

**Scholarship** Among the benefits for A.S. track recipients, 75% of tuition is paid, 90% of book fees are covered, three hours of paid release time is offered, and \$75 per semester is given as a travel stipend (especially important to those working in rural areas where community colleges or universities are not in close proximity).

**Education** One contract is the equivalent to at least nine credit hours of early childhood/child development coursework a year, yet the program will support a recipient up to 18 hours per year. This program is specifically designed to support those already working in the field. Supporting teachers in entering or returning to school helps support local community colleges and university systems in Florida.

**Compensation** Compensation for recipients takes the form of a 2% raise or a \$250 bonus at the completion of each contract (per sponsor discretion). In addition, the T.E.A.C.H. program rewards successful recipients with a \$400 bonus at the end of each contract.

**Commitment** For each signed contract, the recipient is required to commit one year of employment. Benefits are distributed to recipients upon completion of the contract. In 2003, the Florida program was among 16 other states with the model to obtain a turnover rate of less than 10% annually as compared to national rates of up to 30%.

From July 1998 through April 2005, more than 14,000 scholarships were awarded. Following is an example of some of the accomplishments made by recipients during this time span:

- ▲ 990 recipients completed their Director Credential coursework,
- ▲ 2,853 recipients earned their Child Development Associate, Equivalent or Renewal, (CDA, CDA-E),
- ▲ 3,420 recipients completed at least one Associate of Science contract earning a total of 68,732 credit hours toward their degree and
- ▲ 248 recipients actually earned their Associate's degree in early care and education or child development or early childhood education.

The turnover rate for the T.E.A.C.H. program recipients during this same time period was less than 10%. Of the 30% turnover rate in the nation, recent estimates reveal that approximately 18% of center-based staff and 17% of family child care home providers leave the field entirely every year as compared to turnover associated with movement within the field<sup>5</sup>.

## DATA

The data presented in this technical brief represent approximately 2,000 individuals with active T.E.A.C.H. scholarship contracts in each of the four school years examined (fall, spring and summer terms of 2000 to 2004). Data were collected from the T.E.A.C.H. database which consists of self-reported applicant information maintained and updated by program counselors. The main objective of the investigation was to document characteristics of recipients and to examine trends across years. The analysis was conducted using a statistical software program and included cross tabulations, frequencies, and basic descriptive methods for interpretation.

## RESULTS

When examining various demographic trends of T.E.A.C.H. program recipients, distinct patterns emerge. The following presentation is of selected results, including national and between-group comparisons in three sections: Personal Demographics, Employment Demographics, and Comparative Demographics. The full report includes an extensive presentation of tables and additional findings.

## PERSONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

- ▲ The age group of recipients **most represented in the program were those aged 35-44**, which is consistent with national trends (average age of males in the U.S. was 34 and 36.5 years for females in 2003)<sup>6</sup>.

The majority of recipients fell into the age range of 25 to 54 years, which is well over the average age of a traditional college student in most community colleges and universities. Students described as "nontraditional" constitute an increasing proportion of the student population<sup>7</sup>. Nontraditional

students are individuals who do not conform to the profile of the traditional 18-year-old student who enrolls full-time at a community college, completes the freshman and sophomore years, and transfers to a four-year college to earn a baccalaureate degree<sup>8</sup>. Instead, nontraditional students do not fit this mold and often need more flexibility in their educational careers. Scholarship recipients have this flexibility in the T.E.A.C.H. program to commit to a course schedule that fits their needs (e.g. night classes) and recipients have access to a program counselor who can offer academic counseling as well as support through the application process and their contracts.

- ▲ **The majority of recipients self-reported as White with Black recipients only slightly less represented.** A substantial Hispanic population was also served in the program and a significantly smaller group of those self-reported as Multiracial or other (including Native American, Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, and Egyptian).

Those self-reported as White and Black were equally represented as T.E.A.C.H. recipients making up approximately 60-80% of all recipients in the program in each school year (2001- 38.7% vs. 35%, 2002- 34.8% vs. 34.8%, 2003- 35.8% vs. 34.5%, 2004- 38.8% vs. 30.2%). Hispanic recipients generally comprised 16-19% of all recipients and those falling into the other category comprised a marginal portion at 1.8% across the years.

By some estimates, one in three early childhood professionals are minorities; therefore it becomes critical that programs such as T.E.A.C.H. extend their services in order to reach those realistically working in the field<sup>9</sup>. As reflected in these trends, the T.E.A.C.H. program is meeting this need as evidenced in the large percentage of minorities represented in the sample.

- ▲ Regardless of reported race, **the majority of recipients (26.3-30.3%) lived in four person households.**

Table 1 on page 4 summarizes the number of persons living in each recipients household per racial category at the time of application or during the contract. The (\*) symbol represents the most reported category per racial category.

Most Americans reported living in households of 2.57 persons in 2003 with another large group living in one person households<sup>10</sup>. In the program sample, a large portion reported living in three person households (25.9-27.3%); smaller percentages were reported for those in two person households (18.2-19.6%) and less than 5% reported living in one person households. For the largest family size group, a notable range of 19.4 to 22% reported living in households of five persons or more with the largest family including 11 members.

Understanding this demographic can be useful in gaining additional insight into the lives of those working in the early care and education field in Florida. By understanding the size of someone's family household, program counselors, researchers and others can apply general considerations for the likely variations in household responsibilities, budget

**Table 1. Family Size Trends By Recipient Race**

| Family Size by Race | School Terms |   |   |   |    |             |   |   |   |    |             |   |   |   |    |             |   |   |   |    |
|---------------------|--------------|---|---|---|----|-------------|---|---|---|----|-------------|---|---|---|----|-------------|---|---|---|----|
|                     | 2000 - 2001  |   |   |   |    | 2001 - 2002 |   |   |   |    | 2002 - 2003 |   |   |   |    | 2003 - 2004 |   |   |   |    |
|                     | 1            | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5+ | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5+ | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5+ | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5+ |
| White               |              |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   |   | ▲ |    |
| Black               |              |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   |   | ▲ |    |
| Hispanic            |              |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   | ▲ |   |    |             |   | ▲ |   |    |             |   |   | ▲ |    |
| Other               |              |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   |   | ▲ |    |             |   |   |   | ▲  |
| n=                  | 2,148        |   |   |   |    | 1,774       |   |   |   |    | 2,051       |   |   |   |    | 2,589       |   |   |   |    |

\*Note: The symbol (n=) indicates the number of recipients reporting on these questions per year.

concerns, and lifestyles represented across recipients.

▲ The early care and education field at large is dominated by a female workforce at 98% nationally<sup>9</sup>. Similarly in Florida, 98-99% of all recipients were women across the four years.

In 1998, Whitebook reported that the child care is a relatively easy field of employment for anyone to enter, but due to the unequal access to training, education and other avenues of career advancement, poor women and minority women tended to remain disproportionately in the entry-level, lowest-paid child care jobs. Furthermore, since there is virtual free entry into child care employment, child care is not only a female-dominated occupation but it is derived from the gender division that has existed throughout history. Whitebook (1998) suggested that is commonly believed – by the general public, and by many child care consumers, employers and policy makers – that any woman can do this work, and that therefore, when demand for child care increases, the supply of workers can come from the large pool of untrained and inexperienced women looking for jobs. However, experts and researchers recognize that this is not the case and that professional development, both through ongoing training and higher education, is critical to a teachers ability to provide healthy, safe, and learning-rich environments for young children.

Programs like T.E.A.C.H. are specifically designed to target the unique professional development needs of low-compensated workers in the field. Specially, the Florida T.E.A.C.H. program is partly based on higher compensation for the successful completion of scholarship contracts. The sponsor program is obligated to offer a 2% salary increase or a \$250 bonus at the end of each completed contract and the T.E.A.C.H. program provides a \$400 bonus. By connecting compensation rewards for educational achievement, the program works to increase the child development and early childhood education knowledge of recipients and to compensate them for their committed work both in their college classrooms as well as their work classrooms.

▲ The majority of recipients reported themselves as a married parent or grandparent (44-45.5%) whereas nationally, 23.3% of the population self-reported in this category in 2003<sup>10</sup>.

Another significant percentage reported themselves as single parents or grandparents (31.4-33.5%). A smaller portion of those sampled reported being single without children (13-16.6%), which is lower than the national average at 26.4%. The fewest percentage of recipients were married without children (7.5-9.3%), which is significantly lower than the national average (28.2%)<sup>10</sup>. Nearly 80% of all recipients reported having children in their households in the sample (either in married or single parent units).

### EMPLOYMENT DEMOGRAPHICS

▲ A large majority of T.E.A.C.H. recipients worked in profit programs over the four year span of time ranging from 36.6% to 45.3% of all recipient workplaces.

When asked about the auspice of their work setting, the second largest group of recipient trends shifted. In the first half of the time span, 28-29.5% of recipients were in Head Start programs whereas in 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 this trend shifted to non-profit programs (21.5-25.9%). Again, a two year shift appeared in the third largest group of reported auspice of program with approximately 22% reporting working in non-profit programs in 2000-2001 and 19.8-24.7% reported working in Head Start settings. The fourth largest group across the four years were those working in faith-based programs (6.9-9.9%) and finally those in public programs made up the smallest number of recipient workplaces at less than 4% of the total sample.


▲ The vast majority of recipients worked in center-based programs (89.6-90.4%) with 10% of the remaining recipients working in family child care home settings.

According to results of the first phase of a national workforce study, 2.3 million individuals were paid to care for children ages birth to five in a given week in 2002. A break out of this


large group of workers follows: 24% worked in center-based settings (private, public, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten programs); 28% worked in family child care; 35% were paid relatives other than a family child care provider, and 13% were paid non-relatives other than those who work in centers or family child care homes (e.g., nannies)<sup>11</sup>.

The T.E.A.C.H. program was specifically designed to assist two of the four groups identified above - those working in centers and family child care homes. Although families utilizing the services of family child care providers across the country outnumber those placing children in centers, the opportunity to pursue higher education may come more easily for staff in centers than those working from their homes. Center-based care settings operate on the model of serving more children with larger staff support, therefore, the opportunity and flexibility to pursue college coursework during the week is more available for center-based staff who have others to cover their responsibilities. In family child care homes, most operate with the owner as the sole staff. If a family child care provider serves school-age children, they could be the only adult responsible for up to 10 children depending on the ages of children in care. Their absence during the week becomes a more complicated, if not impossible, reality.

The T.E.A.C.H. program is a mechanism that has allowed family child care providers an opportunity to overcome this obstacle as evidenced by the 242 family child care providers served in the program in 2003-2004. Services such as funds for substitutes and travel stipends may work to the benefit of a family child care provider needing unique supports to assist them in their educational goals.

 From fall 2000 to summer 2004, **the T.E.A.C.H. program overwhelmingly served teachers of preschool aged children (53.4-65.3%)**. This trend is consistent with the data reported by other states offering T.E.A.C.H. model programs.

Nationally, almost half (49%) of T.E.A.C.H. program recipients worked with children age three- and four-year-olds and by 2002, two-thirds of four-year-old children and more than 40% of three-year-old children were enrolled in a preschool program<sup>4,12</sup>. However, when compared with a national workforce study results, those served by the Florida program actually worked with children slightly older than national trends<sup>11</sup>.

 Across the four years of services provided, T.E.A.C.H. **counselors overwhelmingly assisted individuals in pursuing their Associate's degrees (A.S.)** in child development or early childhood education (43.9-58.9%).

Understanding the educational scope of the field is important for planning professional development standards for early childhood teachers. At some level, T.E.A.C.H. recipient data can offer longitudinal insight about those seeking higher educational opportunities. The following table presents the number of recipients over the four school years enrolled

in one of three available educational tracks. The second largest majority of recipients were those seeking their Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential, its Equivalent (CDA-E), or a Renewal with 30% to 45.8% of the sample. However, in the school year 2003-2004, more individuals sought CDA's than A.S. degrees, although this margin was small with a difference of 49 persons. The Florida T.E.A.C.H. model program heavily emphasizes the importance of an A.S. degree in the field and priority is generally directed toward those seeking assistance in earning a two-year degree, however, support is available for those seeking other informal and formal professional development opportunities.


**Table 2. Educational Track Trends of Recipients**

| Program Educational Track                           | School Term |             |             |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|   | 2000 - 2001 | 2001 - 2002 | 2002 - 2003 | 2003 - 2004 |
| Director Credential                                 | 263         | 196         | 193         | 240         |
| Child Development Associate (CDA, CDA-E or Renewal) | 775         | 533         | 779         | 1,188       |
| Associate's Degree (A.A., A.S., A.A.S.)             | 1,113       | 1,045       | 1,082       | 1,139       |
| n=  | 2,151       | 1,774       | 2,054       | 2,567       |


\*Note: The symbol (n=) indicates the number of recipients reporting on this question per year.

\*\*Note: A pilot Bachelor's Degree program is currently underway in select university settings.

## COMPARATIVE DEMOGRAPHICS

 As a general trend across age groups and family types, **the vast majority of T.E.A.C.H. recipients reported having children in their households (80%)**.

Paired with the fact that recipients must work in order to qualify for T.E.A.C.H. scholarship funds and that participating translates into taking classes during the week toward their educational goals, those being served by the T.E.A.C.H. program are most likely challenged in balancing family, work, and school responsibilities.

 **The majority of White and Hispanic recipients reported being married parents or grandparents as compared to Black recipients that consistently reported being single parents or grandparents.**

A smaller number of recipients in the other racial categories reported being married parents or grandparents closely followed by those reporting being single parents or grandparents. In the last school year, 53% of White recipients reported being married with children as did 48% of Hispanic recipients. In comparison, 29% of Black recipients reported in this category with 50% reporting being single parents or

grandparents. Given that Black and White recipients are equally represented in the program across the years, these percentages point to an important trend within these families, which are consistent with national data.

For example, Asian householders and White householders in married-coupled families made up 80-82% of their respective populations in 2003-2004. Fewer Hispanic families were married-couples, although 68% self-identified themselves in this category. Finally, the fewest reported married-coupled households in 2003-2004 were reported in Black families with 47%)<sup>10</sup>.



Results indicate that the T.E.A.C.H. program supports a range of recipient age groups whom work with various age groups of children as indicated by Table 3: Recipient Age Trends by Age of Children in Classroom.

### Discussion

For programs of this scope, it is important to examine data of all types, especially data relevant to those the program is serving. From this demographic investigation, it is clear that the Florida T.E.A.C.H. program is serving a representative sample of early care and education professionals including minority women of all ages, various family types and employment settings, and those with different, yet equally important, educational goals. More importantly, services are being offered to this diverse sample of individuals who are already working in a field with several inherent obstacles such as low pay, lack of benefits and leave time, and high turnover.

The parameters of the national T.E.A.C.H. model were specifically designed to serve those working in the field (at least 20 hours weekly) and wanting to pursue higher education in child development or early education. As evidenced in presentation of data, not only does the local Florida T.E.A.C.H. program do just this, but program counselors also serve those falling outside of the majority categories, who also exist in the current workforce. For example, there were a notable number of younger recipients in the program, namely 7% were those ages 18-24 and older recipients (55-84), which totaled 1% of the total sample pursuing higher education. Moreover, male early care and education professionals were also involved in the program ranging from 11 to 29 recipients (2-3%) over the four analyzed years. It is also warranted to note the number of different auspices represented in the sample ranging from non-profits to those working faith-based settings. As the data document, the T.E.A.C.H. program has successfully tapped, at varying degrees, a number of demographic pockets in the state including diverse age, gender, and race groups, program types, and age of child groups.

Table 3. Recipient Age Trends by Age of Children in Classrooms

| Year                   | Age Group by Age | Infant | Preschool | School | Combo |
|------------------------|------------------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|
|                        |                  | n=338  | n=1,398   | n=394  | n=2   |
| 2000 - 2001<br>n=2,133 | 18-24            | 16     | 42        | 1      | 0     |
|                        | 25-34            | 99     | 370       | 74     | 0     |
|                        | 35-44            | 102    | 471       | 150    | 0     |
|                        | 45-54            | 86     | 366       | 114    | 1     |
|                        | 55-64            | 31     | 126       | 47     | 1     |
|                        | 65-74            | 4      | 21        | 7      | 0     |
|                        | 75-84            | 1      | 2         | 1      | 0     |
| Year                   | Age Group by Age | Infant | Preschool | School | Combo |
|                        |                  | n=317  | n=1,066   | n=36   | n=347 |
| 2001 - 2002<br>n=1,760 | 18-24            | 23     | 33        | 2      | 6     |
|                        | 25-34            | 99     | 284       | 18     | 64    |
|                        | 35-44            | 94     | 379       | 6      | 137   |
|                        | 45-54            | 69     | 263       | 6      | 93    |
|                        | 55-64            | 25     | 101       | 2      | 43    |
|                        | 65-74            | 0      | 6         | 1      | 4     |
|                        | 75-84            | 1      | 0         | 1      | 0     |
| Year                   | Age Group by Age | Infant | Preschool | School | Combo |
|                        |                  | n=374  | n=1,242   | n=42   | n=371 |
| 2002 - 2003<br>n=2,029 | 18-24            | 27     | 86        | 3      | 28    |
|                        | 25-34            | 109    | 334       | 14     | 99    |
|                        | 35-44            | 128    | 419       | 10     | 121   |
|                        | 45-54            | 80     | 307       | 9      | 91    |
|                        | 55-64            | 28     | 85        | 4      | 32    |
|                        | 65-74            | 2      | 10        | 2      | 0     |
|                        | 75-84            | 1      | 0         | 0      | 0     |
| Year                   | Age Group by Age | Infant | Preschool | School | Combo |
|                        |                  | n=483  | n=1,377   | n=59   | n=642 |
| 2003 - 2004<br>n=2,561 | 18-24            | 75     | 163       | 14     | 70    |
|                        | 25-34            | 156    | 407       | 15     | 185   |
|                        | 35-44            | 126    | 413       | 15     | 202   |
|                        | 45-54            | 94     | 312       | 12     | 136   |
|                        | 55-64            | 28     | 79        | 3      | 43    |
|                        | 65-74            | 4      | 3         | 0      | 6     |
|                        | 75-84            | 0      | 0         | 0      | 0     |

## Implications for the Workforce

According to Whitebook (1998) the presence of consistent, sensitive, well-trained and well-compensated teachers is critically important to the type of care received by children that promotes their healthy development. Whitebook warned that issues in the field such as high turnover, poor compensation, and few opportunities for advancement may be causing the quality of the services that children and their families receive to dangerously decline<sup>15</sup>.

The T.E.A.C.H program was specifically designed to target critical professional development areas by financially supporting teachers in college, by offering compensation such as leave time and bonuses, and by allowing teachers new opportunities in the field by encouraging and assisting them in their efforts to earn higher educations. A characteristic that sets the T.E.A.C.H. program apart is the ability of staff to meet individual needs. The T.E.A.C.H. program director assigns counselors to specific recipients which allows a higher level of familiarity with individual needs, goals, and increases accountability across staff, recipients, and distributed funds.

Across the nation, nearly 42,000 early childhood teachers have increased their educations through model T.E.A.C.H. programs in the past 5 years<sup>4</sup>. In this, Florida plays a critical role by supporting thousands of its early childhood teachers in earning higher educations. This information, paired with the demographics information presented in this report, develops a clear argument of a workforce in need both in terms of educational support and workforce stability. These needs extend far beyond those earning a living caring for and educating young children; it is the children that ultimately deserve the best care and education. Doing this is no small feat and includes those who know how to provide sensitive care giving, literacy rich environments, socially and emotionally sound experiences, and a multitude of other experiences that have been shown to benefit children in the short-term, as well as in the long-term, even into adulthood<sup>14</sup>.

With the understanding that researchers have reported a critical link between the quality of children's early experiences and their development and education growth later in life, it is imperative that Florida make consistent efforts to support those who create quality early experiences for young children<sup>3,14</sup>. Within this body of literature, several researchers have consistently identified specialized training and education as one of the strongest predictors of quality early experiences for children, and some maintain that ongoing training is necessary for continuous quality improvements<sup>15,16</sup>.

The four core components of the T.E.A.C.H. model (scholarship, education, compensation, and commitment) help to support this diverse population of early care and education workers by providing academic counseling that can assist those new to the higher education system with navigation of a complex system, scholarship funds to assist in paying for an expensive investment in their futures, and an awareness of commitment to their sponsoring employer, their classrooms, and their field.

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