



MIAMI-DADE QUALITY COUNTS WORKFORCE STUDY

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION RESEARCH TO PRACTICE BRIEF 2015



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

A body of research suggests that a relationship exists between the training and education of teachers in early childhood programs and child outcomes. Practitioners who are better prepared professionally are likely to do a better job in working with young children. Understanding how children grow, learn, and develop is essential in implementing evidence-based curricula to improve school readiness and overall child well-being. Moreover, the quality of the interactions between the adults and children in the classroom plays a significant role by helping children grow, thrive and reach their potential¹.

With this knowledge, The Children's Trust has been investing resources aimed at improving the competence of the early childhood workforce through career advising and scholarships. These investments support Quality Counts (QC), Miami-Dade County's quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs launched in 2008. With ongoing funding from The Children's Trust, the Children's Forum manages the Quality Counts Career Center (QCCC) to provide career advising, professional development system support, scholarship administration, wage supplements, and operates the Professional Development Registry as a tool to capture data, track progress and evaluate results. This Workforce Study Update serves as an important resource for stakeholders and funders to evaluate the success of these initiatives, communicate key findings, and inform future policy and practice considerations.

BACKGROUND

To understand the nuances of the early childhood workforce in Miami-Dade County, a comprehensive workforce study was conducted and published in January 2011². Subsequently, workforce study updates have been conducted on an annual basis. The current study represents an update based on employment and education data available as of March 2015 for program sites receiving a rating through Quality Counts 2.0³ and participating in the full Professional Development (PD) Services offered through the Quality Counts Career Center (QCCC) encompassing career advising and educational scholarships. Programs include child care centers and family child care homes (FCCHs)⁴. This study also provides information on how the workforce has changed since its initial entry into Quality Counts. The Professional Development Registry funded through the Quality Counts initiative includes a wealth of workforce information for Miami-Dade early care and education (ECE) teaching staff and directors at programs participating in Quality Counts, making it possible to understand the characteristics of the Quality Counts workforce and offer a picture of the influence of Quality Counts on ECE training opportunities and staff qualifications.

The study questions along with a brief summary of the key findings associated with each question and recommendations going forward are presented in this Research to Practice Brief.

¹Institute of Medicine (IOM) and National Research Council (NRC). 2015. Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8:A unifying foundation. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

² Clements, M. (2011). Miami-Dade County Quality Counts Workforce Study. Children's Forum and The Children's Trust.

Retrieved May 15, 2014 from <http://www.flchild.com/downloads/publications/QCCC%20Workforce%20Study.pdf>

³ Effective November 2013, Quality Counts standards were revised (referred to as Quality Counts 2.0 Standards) to reflect on-going national research on the elements of a quality early care and education program leading to better child outcomes.

⁴ The sample described in this study does not include Head Start centers or Miami-Dade County Public Schools pre-K classrooms because those programs do not presently receive full professional development services offered through the QCCC.

FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

What are the characteristics of ECE programs in QC?

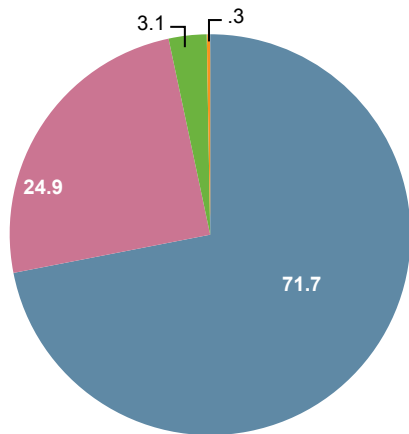
- ▶ 1,991 practitioners at 221 program sites receive PD services
- ▶ 198 centers employ 98% of practitioners
- ▶ 23 FCCHs employ 2% of practitioners

What are the characteristics of the ECE workforce participating in QC?

- ▶ Primarily female
- ▶ Middle aged (45 years on average)
- ▶ Largely Spanish speaking and of Hispanic origin
- ▶ Originating from over 30 different countries
- ▶ Cuba and the United States most prevalent countries of origin
- ▶ Having relatively low education levels

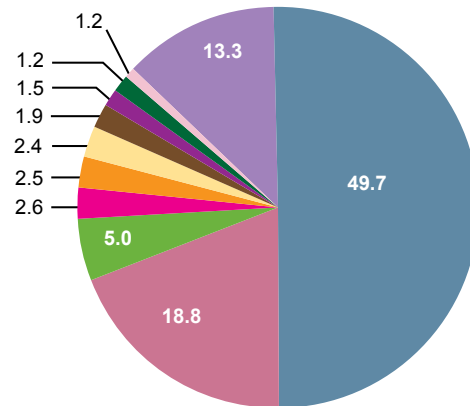


Exhibit 1. Percentage of Practitioners by Primary Language Spoken (N = 1,991).



- Spanish
- English
- Haitian Creole
- Other/Not Reported

Exhibit 2. Percentage of Practitioners by Country of Origin (N = 1,991).



- Cuba
- United States
- Colombia
- Venezuela
- Mexico
- Haiti
- Dominican Republic
- Puerto Rico
- Nicaragua
- Peru
- Other

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

What is the educational attainment of the ECE workforce participating in QC?

Highest Education Level:

- ▶ 24% = no diploma/degree on record
- ▶ 46% = high school diploma
- ▶ 9% = Associate's degree/equivalent
- ▶ 19% = Bachelor's degree
- ▶ 2% = graduate level degree

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

What is the educational attainment of the ECE workforce participating in QC?

Staff Credential:

- ▶ 78% of teaching staff hold a DCF-issued Florida Staff Credential/FCCPC
- ▶ 11% of teaching staff hold a National CDA

Director Credential:

- ▶ 61% of program sites have a Director with a Foundational Level I or II Director Credential
- ▶ 39% of program sites have a director with an Advanced Director Credential



Has educational attainment improved since the inception of QC? Has progress been made on practitioner career goals?

- ▶ 7% improved overall educational level
- ▶ 81% made progress toward goals (accepted educational scholarship)
- ▶ 82% of teaching staff who did not have a Florida Staff Credential or equivalent at QC entry now have obtained one
- ▶ 28% of program sites whose director did not have an Advanced Credential at QC entry now have one
- ▶ 42% of Child Care WAGE\$® (WAGE\$) participants increased on the WAGE\$ salary supplement scale
- ▶ Longer WAGE\$ participation linked with greater increases on the WAGE\$ scale

Note: The Child Care WAGE\$® Florida Project is a licensed program created by the Child Care Services Association in North Carolina. Teachers meeting participation requirements⁵ receive a salary supplement on a semi-annual basis according to an incremental scale ranging from Level 1 to Level 8. Each level specifies a required level of education or continuing course work toward degrees with an accompanying supplement amount. Since movement up the scale is incremental, teachers can increase the amount of their supplement by participating in ongoing education to eventually earn a degree. The highest level requires an advanced degree in early childhood or child development.

⁵ Must remain with their employer for the previous six months and earn less than \$17.50 per hour and specific to Miami-Dade policies successfully complete 3 ECE credits or 4.5 CEUs in early childhood or the English language every two years of participation and remain in good standing. Priority is given to those working in designated geographical areas.

Exhibit 3. Percentage of Practitioners Improving their Highest Education Level (N = 1105).

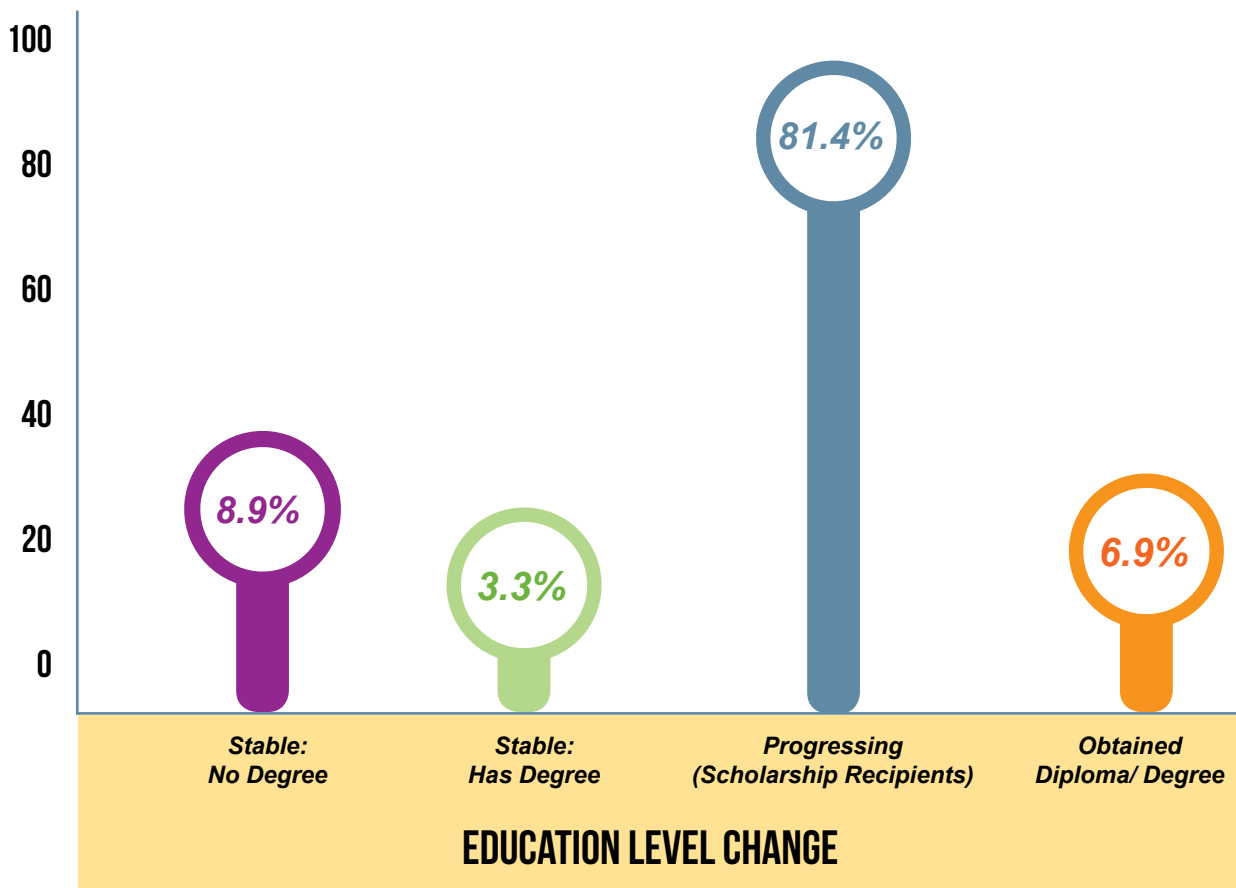
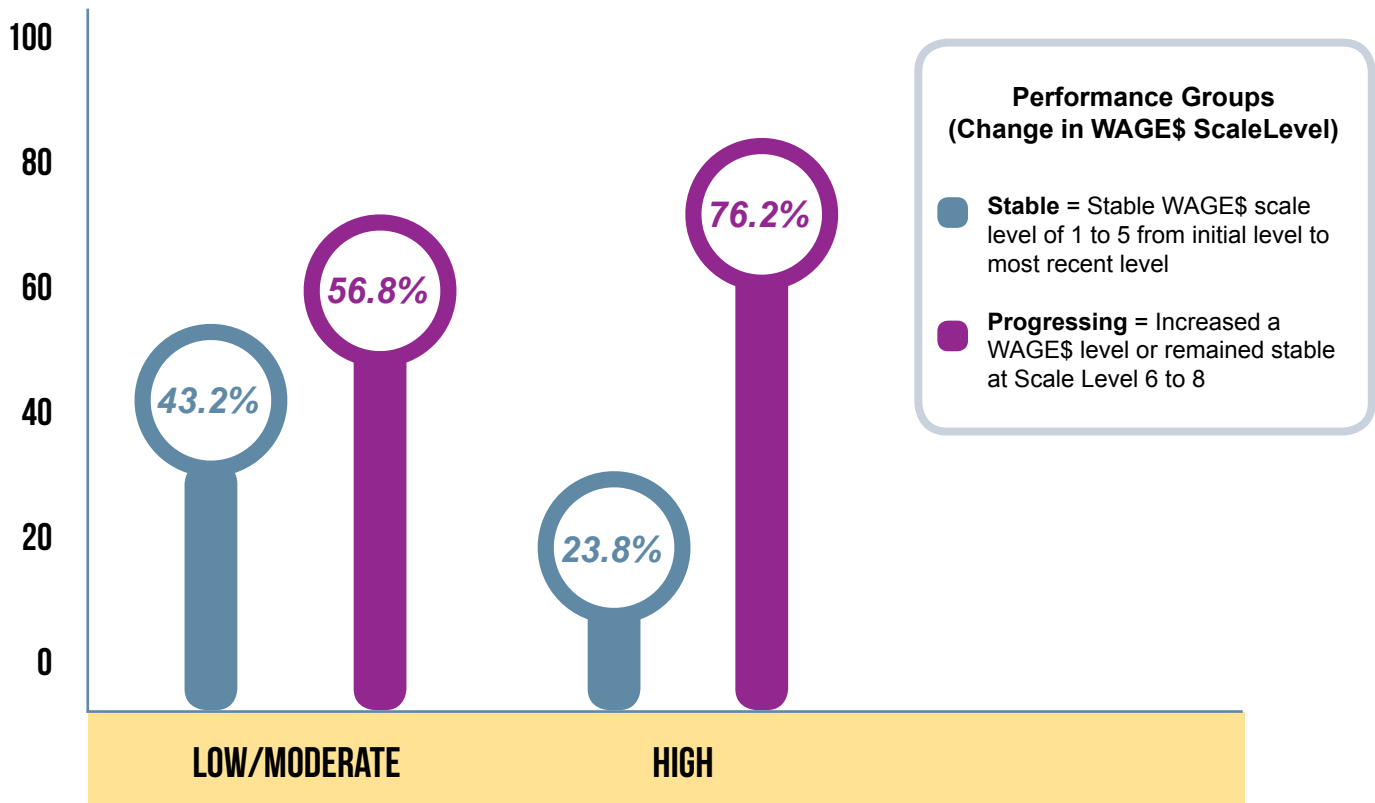


Exhibit 4. WAGE\$ Performance by Years of Participation: Percent with Low, Moderate, and High Participation Falling Within Performance Groups. (N = 558).



What trends emerge in educational attainment and scholarship usage over time?

- ▶ On average, it takes about 2.5 to 3 years for practitioners to obtain a higher education level during QC participation.
- ▶ Those practitioners who improve their education level during QC participation are more likely to accept credit-bearing scholarships than scholarships for non-credit trainings or document translations.

Note: Achieving a higher education level includes obtaining a high school diploma or college degree during QC participation.

Exhibit 5. Average Number of Years to Achieve a Diploma/Degree since QC Entry.

EDUCATION CHANGE GROUP	AVERAGE YEARS TO ACHIEVE CURRENT EDUCATION LEVEL (N = 72)
Obtain HS Diploma (n = 40)	2.8
Obtain Degree (n = 22)	2.5
Obtain Higher Degree (n = 10)	2.9

EMPLOYMENT AND BENEFITS

What is the employment status of the ECE workforce?

- ▶ 86% employed full-time
- ▶ Employed at current program for 6 years on average
 - ▷ Directors employed at current program for 9 years on average
 - ▷ Teachers employed at current program for 5 years on average

What are the earnings of the ECE workforce participating in QC?

- ▶ Median hourly wage for the full workforce = \$9.00
 - ▷ Directors median hourly wage = \$12.00
 - ▷ Teachers median hourly wage = \$8.50

What benefits are available and accessed by the ECE workforce participating in QC?

- ▶ 15% received no benefits
- ▶ 85% received one or more benefits

Of those who received benefits, rates for various benefit categories included:

- ▶ 82% = Paid Time Off
- ▶ 42% = Professional Development
- ▶ 19% = Health
- ▶ 10% = Retirement



What factors are associated with earnings of the ECE workforce participating in QC?

A practitioner's hourly wage is impacted by several factors which they can directly influence to improve their earning potential and marketability within the ECE workforce. Taking various demographic and educational factors into account, statistical analyses show the hourly wage of QC participants is impacted by a practitioner's:

1. **English Language Skills:** Primary English speakers can expect to make \$1.59 more per hour on average than those whose primary language is not English.
2. **Years of employment with their current program:** For every 5 years remaining with their current employer, practitioners can expect to make \$1.00 more per hour.
3. **Educational Status:** Practitioners holding college degrees can expect to make an average of \$1.45 more an hour compared to non-degree holders. Those with a degree have higher wages regardless of English competency, but holding a degree has a larger impact on hourly wage for those practitioners whose primary language is English (\$3.02 more per hour compared to \$0.83 more per hour). Those with 18 ECE credits also make higher hourly wages and that difference is more pronounced for those whose primary language is not English; although the difference is not large enough to be statistically different.

Exhibit 6. Impact on Hourly Wage.

FACTORS	IMPACT ON HOURLY WAGE		
	All Practitioners	English Not Primary Language	English Primary Language
If English is the primary language	\$1.59* more	N/A	N/A
For every additional year of employment	\$0.21* more	\$0.16.* more	\$0.29* more
If employed in low income area	\$0.52* less	\$0.29 less	\$1.37* less
Have 18+ ECE Credits	\$0.30* more	\$0.66 more	\$0.50 more less
Have a college degree	\$1.45* more	\$0.83* more	\$3.02* more

*Significantly higher/lower hourly wage.

These findings show the “unique” contribution of each individual factor in the context of all of the other factors. For example, having a high comfort level with the English language (as measured by primary language) significantly impacts hourly wage even after taking into consideration the impact of years employed with the current employer, educational experience, and program location.

It is noteworthy that being of Hispanic or Haitian ethnicity is significantly related to lower hourly wages but not after taking primary language into consideration. This suggests that a practitioner’s proficiency and comfort level with the English language, an ability they can improve upon, affects what they are paid by their employer much more so than their native ethnicity.

In summary, having strong English language skills, acquiring a degree, and remaining with their employer longer-term can help practitioners garner higher wages and increase their value at their programs and in the ECE workforce. Also, though the impact is not as large, acquiring 18 ECE credits can have an impact on practitioners’ earning capacity, especially for those in the process of building their English language skills. Those whose primary language is not English and who have 18 ECE credits make a median of \$10.00 per hour relative to \$8.50 for their same language peers who do not have 18 ECE credits. As well, developing strong English language skills can help practitioners get the most value out of their degrees. The median hourly wage of those practitioners holding a degree and having English as their primary language is \$11.66 an hour relative to \$9.50 for practitioners not meeting these two criteria.



Overall, practitioners with college degrees earn the highest wages (\$10.00 per hour compared to \$8.50). However, it has taken two to three years to obtain a degree for the small group (n = 32) of practitioners that have accomplished this goal since their QC participation. Most practitioners have not obtained a degree; some are currently working towards a degree and others experience a variety of barriers to obtaining a degree. This makes it especially encouraging that practitioners can increase their earning potential by building their English language proficiency and obtaining 18 ECE credits.

Insomuch as nearly three-quarters of the Miami-Dade QC workforce identifies a primary language other than English, an important take-home message for this large majority of practitioners is that they can strengthen their English proficiency and education levels to improve their earning potential. These goals are within reach and can improve their competence in working with young children and increase their value in the marketplace.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this update mirror those found in prior years and have provided an opportunity to reflect on existing policies and practices and make adjustments to ensure the best outcomes for children. Low wages continue to challenge the field in retaining a qualified workforce equipped with the skills needed to improve child outcomes. Practitioners receiving wage supplements through the Child Care WAGE\$ program are more likely to remain in their programs and improve their education. While funding is limited to expand the existing program, opportunities have expanded within the professional development system in Miami-Dade County for practitioners to increase their earning potential, particularly for those who are less proficient in English. The following strategies are currently being implemented as a result of this research:

- ▶ A comprehensive communications and awareness campaign has been rolled out to engage, support, and encourage practitioners in collaboration with system partners.
- ▶ Quality Counts career advisors are sharing study findings with practitioners who have limited English proficiency to encourage educational pursuits.
- ▶ Educational institutions in Miami-Dade have expanded opportunities for practitioners to access both credit-bearing and continuing education bilingual programs to help practitioners acquire English skills and improve their competencies in working with young children.

In summary, supports provided by the QCCC, in particular advising, scholarships and wage supplements appear to be effective in motivating practitioners to pursue higher levels of education and remain at their employment for longer periods of time. As the research suggests, an educated, fairly compensated workforce and continuity of care provide better outcomes for the children served⁶.

⁶ Torquati, J. C., Raikes, H., & Huddleston-Casas, C. A. (2007). Teacher education, motivation, compensation, workplace support, and links to quality of center-based child care and teachers’ intention to stay in the early childhood profession. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 22, 261-275.

