

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

Conversations with Stakeholders.

Carrie Lobman and Sharon Ryan
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey

Jill McLaughlin
Association for Children of New Jersey

Graduate School of Education
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901
732-932-7496 ext 8116

Financial Support for this study was provided by the Foundation for Child Development
New York, New York

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors greatly acknowledge the teachers, administrators, teacher educators and policymakers who participated in the focus groups. This report would also not be possible without the research assistance of Debra Ackerman and Joanne Curcio. The authors wish to acknowledge the following individuals and agencies:

Babyland Family Services, Newark, New Jersey

The Educational Information and Resource Center, Sewell, New Jersey

Cynthia Rice, Association for Children of New Jersey

Fasaha Traylor, Foundation for Child Development

Urban League of Hudson County, Jersey City, New Jersey

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
INTRODUCTION	8
BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	10
METHODOLOGY	11
Participants.....	12
Data Collection	13
Data Analysis	14
FINDINGS	15
Differing Discourses on Early Childhood Teacher Development	16
Knowledge and Skills	18
Teacher Characteristics	23
What Kinds of Experiences do Preschool Teachers Need to Have?	25
Creating an Effective System of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development.....	29
The State	29
Higher Education	34
District Level	38
Interactions between Levels of the System.....	41
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	48
Content and Form of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development.....	48
The System of Preschool Teacher Development	50
Recommendations	52
REFERENCES	56

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Thirty-eight individuals participated in eight focus group interviews during the 2004-04 academic year. The sample included 16 preschool teachers, 11 professional development providers or administrators, 5 teacher educators from 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, and 6 state policymakers. The interview protocols concentrated on four main topics: definitions of the knowledge, dispositions, and skills preschool teachers need to have, the content of current preparation and professional development experiences and perceived gaps in current offerings, barriers and supports in the current system, and ideas about improving the current system.

Summary of the Findings

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

Content and Form of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

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

First, missing from these conversations was attention to the kinds of knowledge and skills that national standards say teachers need to be able to work with students from diverse cultural and

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

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

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

The System of Preschool Teacher Development

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

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

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

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

The final barrier to creating a high quality workforce is the lack of partnerships occurring between universities and school districts, and between 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, as well as the various agencies and individuals providing professional development. Every stakeholder was able to identify areas where the system or “non-system” as it has been called could be improved through partnerships, and continuity within and across components of the system.

Recommendations

With preschool teacher preparation and professional development at the forefront of current educational discourse, the findings of these focus group conversations highlight future directions for those responsible for educating teachers.

- To ensure that teachers are being prepared in up to date knowledge about addressing the diverse needs of student learners and creating rigorous, developmentally appropriate curriculum that enables all children to learn across the content areas, institutions of higher education should:
 - Develop a communication campaign to disseminate information about the knowledge base required to be an effective preschool teacher.
 - Engage in a self-study or audit of the content of coursework by bringing teacher educators together along with the syllabi for their courses to discuss how they approach the teaching of particular topics and the strategies they use to assist students with difficult content.
 - Examine exemplary program in other states to elicit ideas and new perspectives.
- In response to the concerns raised by all stakeholders that there is a lack of expertise at all levels of the current system it is recommended that some effort be made to recruit and expand the numbers of qualified and experienced early childhood leaders in the state. To enact this recommendation will require not only providing enough fiscal support to the hiring of new faculty and early childhood specialists, but will also necessitate turning our attention towards the creation of new programs of training in early childhood leadership where currently only certification or doctoral programs exist.
- To ensure that collaborations between various levels of the system do not occur by happenstance or through individualized action alone we recommend that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education. This agency would:
 - Promote and support partnerships between agencies at different levels of the system.
 - Serve as a clearinghouse for partnerships and collaborations between and across levels of the professional development and teacher preparation system.
 - Ensure that the system as a whole is developing programs and services that meet the needs of the preschool workforce and the children that they serve.

INTRODUCTION

As publicly funded preschool programs expand across the United States, the demand for qualified preschool teachers is increasing. Teachers who have at least a Bachelors degree (BA) and specialized training in early childhood education have been found to be more likely to provide young children with educational experiences that support their learning and development, and ensure ongoing academic success in elementary school (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Dwyer, Chait, & McKee, 2000; Howes, 1997; Whitebook, 2003).

Despite this evidence, the current workforce does not reflect the ideal of a qualified teacher in every preschool classroom across the country. Whereas Kindergarten teachers are expected to have a minimum of a BA and a teaching certificate, only 18 states require that teachers in private early childhood settings undergo any preservice training (Ackerman, 2004). These varying regulations have contributed to a workforce that nationally representative studies (e.g. Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002) estimate has only 50% of teachers with a bachelor degree of some kind. At the same time, even those teachers who have a Bachelors degree do not necessarily have a teaching certificate or the specialized training in early childhood education that the research base argues is critical to being a knowledgeable professional (Saluja, Early, & Clifford, 2002). In order to meet the demand for qualified preschool teachers therefore, it is becoming increasingly necessary to focus not only on the recruitment and preparation of preservice teachers but also to improve the credentials and knowledge base of those already in the field.

This is no easy task given that the training of early childhood teachers is the province of multiple agencies and institutions -- that include universities, community colleges, resource and

referral agencies, professional organizations offering conferences, and individual consultants -- all tending to work independently of one another. Not only is there no coherent system of teacher preparation and professional development, but what teachers of young children are expected to know and be able to do has also changed in recent years. With the drive to use preschool as the foundation for academic and social success, teachers are not only expected to know how young children learn and develop but to facilitate learning in domain specific knowledge and in ways that are responsive to increasingly diverse groups of student learners. Thus, the kind of reform anticipated is extensive, requiring the forging of partnerships across discrete institutions with simultaneous attention on altering the content of current training and preparation programs.

While there appears to be growing consensus among researchers about the components of quality early childhood teacher preparation and professional development (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Isenberg, 2000), little is known about the views of those on the frontlines of early childhood education—teachers and those responsible for training preschool teachers --who will need to enact these desired changes. In general, the field of early childhood teacher preparation and professional development is an under-researched area (Bredenkamp, 1986). What is known, however, is that within the broad early childhood community there are multiple understandings of what quality is, what teaching is, and what the aims of early childhood programs should be. These differences have produced a “serious mismatch between the preparation (and compensation) of early childhood professionals and the growing expectations of parents and policy makers” (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001, p. 261).

This paper shares the findings of a series of focus groups with key stakeholders in New Jersey who have been involved in a statewide reform effort aimed at creating a coordinated

system of preschool teacher preparation and professional development. These findings and their implications offer practical suggestions for those involved in similar reform efforts within their own contexts.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

New Jersey provides a unique context from which to examine the professional preparation and development of preschool teachers. Through legislation adopted in 1996, state funded preschool and full-day kindergarten was mandated for 132 low-income school districts in New Jersey (N.J.S.A. 18:7F). These districts include the 30 highest poverty districts, known as Abbott districts, as well as an additional 102 districts with high concentrations of low-income students, non-Abbott Early Childhood Program Aid (ECPA) districts.

Through a series of Supreme Court decisions, the Abbott districts were required to create systems of high quality preschool for all 3- and 4-year-old children beginning in the 1999-2000 school year. The Court mandated that all teachers in Abbott preschools--unless they already held the Nursery or Kindergarten through Grade 8 Certificate and had two years of experience working with preschool aged children--must obtain a minimum of a BA with Preschool- Grade 3 (P-3) Certification by September 2004 (*Abbott v. Burke VI*, 2000). As there had not been a specialized early childhood teaching certificate in the state, New Jersey's institutions of higher education created specialized P-3 certification programs, utilizing both alternate route and traditional approaches to teacher preparation. Several funding sources (Quality and Capacity grants, Teacher Effectiveness and Teacher Preparation Grants) were also provided by the state government, through the Commission for Higher Education, to help institutions of higher education expand their early childhood faculties. Further, as school districts were to collaborate

with existing Head Start and private child care programs already offering preschool in their communities, and many of these teachers had to obtain a P-3, a state- funded scholarship program was also initiated to pay for teachers' tuition as they upgraded their qualifications.

At the same time as this P-3 preparation system was being created, school districts embarked on a series of initiatives to ensure the professional development of preschool teachers. These initiatives included the employment of master teachers to provide technical assistance and in-classroom support with implementing developmentally appropriate curriculum models. Early childhood supervisors were also employed to oversee and implement ongoing professional development experiences for the district's preschool teachers. Thus a new teacher preparation and professional development system was developed in a short period of time.

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

METHODOLOGY

This study is the third of a larger three-part study of preschool teacher preparation and professional development. In the first two studies we conducted surveys to ascertain both teachers' perspectives and experiences within the new P-3 system as well as the views of those responsible for preparing preschool teachers (see Ryan & Ackerman, 2004; Lobman, Ryan,

McLaughlin, & Ackerman, 2004 for more details). A series of focus group interviews were employed for the third phase of the study. These group interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2000) were used to enable the researchers to get a deeper understanding of some of the issues identified through the surveys. The researchers also wanted to ascertain how the various views of different stakeholders might be harnessed to improve the system that had been put in place.

Participants

Participants for the focus groups were purposefully selected to represent the various stakeholders involved in preschool teacher professional development and preparation. This selection process varied for each category of stakeholder. Policymakers at the state level were identified and approached to participate in one focus group. Preschool teachers, professional development providers, and representatives of 2- and 4-year colleges involved in P-3 certification programs were selected based on their responses to survey questions in the larger study.

From this initial listing, we then used a second level of criteria to determine the final participants representing each stakeholder group. With the aim of achieving maximum variation in teacher backgrounds, the final criteria guiding selection of preschool teachers was location in the state (i.e. north, central or southern regions), level of experience, and education qualifications. Professional development providers were chosen to represent the diversity of agencies providing training to preschool teachers and included representatives from resource and referral agencies, master teachers, child care administrators, district staff developers, and school principals. Equal numbers of representatives from 2- and 4- year institutions of higher education were selected because of the programs offered by their institutions (dual certification programs,

alternate route programs, etc.) and the partnerships they had with other training agencies (e.g. articulation agreements). As there were only a select few policymakers involved directly with early childhood teacher development, this stakeholder group was not subjected to any further sampling decisions.

This selection process generated a list of 69 potential participants. We then contacted each individual by phone with an email follow-up seeking their participation. Twenty chose not to participate because of scheduling conflicts, lack of time, or in the case of one early childhood supervisor because her superintendent was not comfortable with her participation in the study. The final sample consisted of 38 participants (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Sample

Participant Group	Total Number
Preschool Teachers	16
4-Year University	3
2-Year Colleges	2
Professional Development Providers/Trainers	11
Policymakers	6
Total	38

Data Collection

A total of eight focus groups were held across the state at times and locations convenient to the participants. Groups were organized according to participants' relationships to the field of

early education. Therefore 3 focus groups were held with preschool teachers, 2 with professional development providers, and one each with policymakers and representatives of 2-year colleges and 4-year university representatives. Group size ranged from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 6 participants.

Sessions lasted approximately two hours and were facilitated by the first two authors, both experienced qualitative researchers. Utilizing a semi-structured protocol, focus group sessions began with introductions, and then concentrated on four main topics: definitions of the knowledge, dispositions, and skills preschool teachers need to have, the content of current preparation and professional development experiences and perceived gaps in current offerings, barriers and supports in the current system, and ideas about improving the current system. During these interviews, the third author took research notes on the conversation, room arrangement, and participant responses throughout the session. At the conclusion of each focus group interview, all three researchers met together to reflect on the session, noting important ideas that might guide later analysis. All focus group interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim as close to the day of the interview as possible by the third author to ensure accuracy of the transcripts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of the focus group data followed a five-step plan. Drawing on Krueger & Casey (2000), the first step involved organizing the interviews transcripts according to stakeholder group (teachers, professional development providers, 2-year college, 4-year college). Each group was assigned a color for ease of reference. In the next step the data set for each stakeholder group was read several times and sorted according to research question. All data

relating to each research question was then transferred into its own computer file ready for coding.

In the third step, members of the research team carried out content analysis of each research question individually. Together, the team then went through the data set assigned to each question line by line comparing codes to ensure consistency. Where there were points of disagreement the team selected the code that reflected their joint consensus on the meaning conveyed by the data. If it was not possible to find one code to capture the meaning of a piece of text then the data excerpt was double coded. The data record was then chunked again according to its assigned code. Using the process of categorical aggregation outlined by Stake (1995), the chunked excerpts of text related to each code within a question were then read carefully first to generate a sense of the meanings given to the code across all participants, and second to ascertain whether there were any differences among stakeholder groups. At the end of this step, a general summary narrative of the data pertaining to each question was developed which also described points of consensus and difference within and between stakeholders. Finally, each summary was carefully scrutinized and general themes that grouped codes together were developed.

FINDINGS

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

Differing Discourses on Early Childhood Teacher Development

The question of what knowledge and skills a preschool teacher needs to have has been in transition for the past twenty years or so. Reflecting research-based evidence that early childhood education and child development coursework predicts positive interactions between teachers and their young students (Honig & Hirallel, 1998), policies concerning the preparation of early childhood teachers (see, e.g. Hyson, 2003; Katz & Goffin, 1990; McCarthy, 1990; Spodek and Saracho, 1990) recommend that students should be provided with a foundation in early childhood educational topics. These topics include child development and learning theory, as well as methods courses in both pedagogy and curricular approaches. In addition to a general knowledge of teaching content, preschool teachers also need to know the relevant standards and be able to show evidence of student learning. To realize the kind of teaching practices and interactions among teachers and children that positively effect children's development and learning, teacher preparation programs also should "prepare teachers to understand how to apply this knowledge in specific program planning and in assessing and adapting instruction to meet the needs of individual children, "especially those from "diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (Bredekamp, 1996, p. 339).

Underlying these guidelines, however, are three tensions that pervade discussions of who should be an early childhood teacher, what they need to know, and the experiences that will ensure this learning. The first of these concerns what some teacher educators and researchers see as the dominance of child development as the foundational knowledge base for early childhood teaching (Goffin, 1996; Ryan & Grieshaber, 2005; Stott & Bowman, 1996). This argument is based on the premise that child development, with its focus on universal stages of development,

has had a European, middle-class bias that has helped to solidify the myth of the normal child—and by comparison, the abnormal or atypically developing child. While some members of the field believe that this debate has been resolved with the revisions to the Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) to incorporate the cultural basis of development, there continues to be concern that without the inclusion of different theoretical perspectives to the knowledge base, most teachers will only address issues of culture and context from a superficial level.

The second tension concerns the trend towards the professionalization of the field of early childhood teaching and the concomitant academic focus of national policies and programs. As a consequence, there is movement away from the image of preschool teaching as being primarily the domain of untrained women who love and care for children and increased attention to professionalizing the knowledge and actions of teachers. For some (Blair, 2002) this tension has raised the concern that efforts to validate and improve the training and status of preschool teachers may overlook or marginalize the socio-emotional aspects of teaching young children.

Teacher preparation and professional development has traditionally combined two types of experiences—coursework and/or workshops on methods, theory, and content, and classroom experiences that allow pre- and in-service teachers to practice their skills in the realities of a classroom setting. Although the value of having some combination of these two components is generally accepted (Hyson, 2003), a third tension arises from the lack of consensus about how much emphasis should be placed on each component within some kind of training program.

While these debates often tend to be located in the realm of research, they were also evident in the conversations we had with stakeholders. We begin with stakeholders' views on the

knowledge and skills preschool teachers need to have followed by a discussion of the characteristics of a good preschool teacher, and conclude with types of learning experiences that stakeholders believe preschool teacher must have to be able to do their job well.

Knowledge and Skills

As mentioned previously there are three bodies of knowledge that policy and national standards argue preschool teachers must know. All groups of stakeholders articulated that preschool teachers need foundational knowledge in child development and pedagogy, an understanding of curriculum content as well as how to teach diverse groups of learners. However, there were differences in the emphasis placed on particular categories of knowledge and this variation was also dependent on the type of stakeholder answering the question.

Child development.

You need to learn how young children learn and develop. If you don't understand it, you won't be able to understand children. And when you do understand it, then you are able to work better with children. You will know that a 4-year old is a 4-year old and you have to come down to their level and teach them the best way to learn. That's the course that will prepare you to be a preschool teacher. (Preschool Teacher)

Knowledge about how children learn and develop was identified by more participants than any other kind of knowledge as central to being a well-informed preschool teacher. For most of the participants this knowledge was important so that teachers would understand that development occurs in stages, that young children learn differently than older children and adults, and that they therefore require different teaching techniques. Several participants stressed that teachers need to be able to bring the curriculum down to the children's level, to get down on the floor, be playful, and creative.

They [elementary teachers] can't bring themselves down as teachers to work with kids. They think the teacher is "I, authoritative teacher" who walks around the classroom and

says “Do this,” instead of getting down on the floor and playing in the block area for a half-hour with kids. You know they just can’t get it. (Preschool Teacher).

Teachers tended to speak about child development knowledge, not as a theoretical concept, but as developmentally appropriate practice.

As far as the ongoing training, if you’re going to be good pre-K teachers, you need to have knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices. There are so many things that we’re trying to get young children to do. (Preschool Teacher)

In contrast, teacher educators tended to stress theories of child development as the means by which teachers came to understand and know children. As one 2-year college professor said, “I believe that teachers, particularly pre-service teachers, need to be well grounded in theory. They need to know how children learn, think and feel....”

As participants spoke about the importance of child development knowledge in practice they also referred to using child development knowledge to respond to children’s behavior in positive ways and setting up a rich and engaging classroom environment. As one teacher said, “You have to create the environment that is conducive to children learning.”

I believe that teachers need to learn how to set limits. They need to learn appropriate guidance to work with young children and methodologies that respect the child, but also foster the child’s respect for their classmates, their environment and the teacher as well too. (2-Year Teacher Educator)

Another set of responses about child development revolved around the need to justify and explain early childhood methods to parents and administrators. In these instances developmental theory was the tool that teachers needed to combat parents who wanted their children to be engaged in more traditional academic work, and who were concerned that all their children were doing was “playing.” As one preschool teacher said:

In early childhood, especially in preschool, you are going to get parents who say to you, it’s May; they’ve been playing all year. Every time I come in here, they’re playing. If you

don't know what to say, or you can't answer them intelligently, that's not sufficient for a parent...

For teachers and professional development providers, being able to enact developmentally appropriate practices was also linked to being able to justify and show parents why it is important to work with children at their developmental level.

Developmentally appropriate practice. They have to know so much and believe in it because every day they're going to have a mother saying to them, "Why is he not writing yet? Why doesn't he know all of his ABCs yet?" And so, what happens I think in a lot of cases the teachers get the training, but when they get into the real world—unfortunately the school district also where I am working is pushing this and the parents are pushing this, and here I am with the assistant director saying, "Wow, developmentally appropriate practice." And they're sneaking the children dittos when we're not watching. (Professional Development Provider)

The general consensus among participants was that teaching young children is different than elementary or secondary teaching because in early childhood teachers are facilitators of learning experiences rather than providers of knowledge. Knowing children and being able to enact developmentally appropriate practice enables teachers to take this facilitative stance.

Curriculum and Content Knowledge. Despite the current emphasis in national policies on educators readying children for formal schooling, very few participants discussed either curriculum or content knowledge pedagogy as something preschool teachers need to know and be able to use. Individuals concerned with the professional development of preschool teachers were more likely to speak to this topic, although their comments tended to be rather broad about the kinds of concepts and skills teachers should learn and master.

I believe, a skill a teacher needs to know is what is a good curriculum. Not a very high structured one. At least to observe a High Scope creative curriculum. (2-Year Teacher Educator)

...not just child growth and development, but also the process of learning. Like how do children learn different content areas? How do children learn to read, how do children learn math? What is their knowledge base? (4-Year Teacher Educator)

This same 4-year teacher educator then went on to point out that the teachers who receive a P-3 certificate could also teach 3rd grade, and that it is critical that they receive enough content knowledge for this context. She also talked about the importance of P-3 teachers having a liberal arts background so that they can accumulate the intellectual knowledge and skills that they will need to be “thinkers.”

When participants did identify specific content areas, they were more likely to talk about literacy than any other content area.

Well, I think they need to have some basic notion of how to teach a child to read instead of just telling a child no. “Pronouce that.” Understanding developmental stages and growth. It is not enough to just think back to how you were taught. You maybe were taught a good way or not a good way. (2-year Teacher Educator)

Reading to them everyday, using the vocabulary of literacy. I've been fortunate to have a lot of training from talking about the cover of a book and the title of a book, and identify the letters on that and morning message...(Preschool Teacher)

On the other hand, only one participant mentioned the importance of learning how to teach art or technology. Math, social studies and science were not discussed at all.

Diversity. Since 1997, the guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) have recognized that teachers need to be cognizant of the role of culture and context in children’s learning and development. Most stakeholders however, tended to talk about diversity issues in very general terms.

I think just in general too we need more on diversity. It just needs to be out there more. We probably talk about it in round about ways, but never really actually see it. (Preschool Teacher)

In contrast 2- year community college personnel, who are working with diverse populations themselves, argued that preschool teachers need a more sophisticated understanding of how to work responsively in the classroom. For these teacher educators diversity should be integrated throughout all coursework.

I'm very staunchly supportive of a curriculum that includes diversity. That weaves multicultural and diversity into every subject so that every course assures that the diversity component is integrated with the curriculum, that students learn early on that it is more than rice and beans on Friday. That the multicultural curriculum is one that pays attention to culture but doesn't separate children because they are different. (2-Year Teacher Educator)

Some teachers, on the other hand, did not even recognize this kind of knowledge as necessary for every preschool teacher to know. Rather they saw this kind of expertise as being context specific. As one preschool teacher responded, "No, I don't think it should be a part of teacher preparation because maybe you don't have any Spanish speaking children." Similarly, this participant considered diversity as having knowledge of specific cultural groups and what makes them unique.

I feel that diversity—the teacher must know the culture. Every aspect of that culture, if it's Haiti, Puerto Rico, or anywhere. So they should be able to bring culture into the classroom. It's the only way children connect and bond. (Child Care Director)

For some stakeholders, diversity was not about culture per se so much as recognizing and responding to the complex circumstances that mediate children's lives and that cannot be separated from their school experiences.

It used to be when I used to teach, children were mostly from two parent homes and were always around and the child knew where they were going to wake up, knew who was going to be there. I would say my class in the last few years that is not at all the case. They never know where they're getting dropped off on the school bus, on a daily basis it may change. They don't know what male is going to be in that home. They don't know if that same male is going to be there when they wake up in the morning. It's very difficult for a three-year-old. (Preschool Teacher)

Underlying these responses was an assumption that the poverty of the children living in the Abbott districts means that they are likely to be from single parent homes and without a lot of emotional or physical support.

A final set of responses concerning diversity knowledge focused more specifically on English Language Learners and children with special needs.

I think because inclusion is such a big thing in the state now, I personally don't feel that I need special ed training, but the girls that are coming... these kids, the people that are taking the positions really need a lot more support and a lot more training in inclusion in special needs children.(Preschool Teacher)

However, one professional development provider implied that teachers did not need a special set of skills on special education, but that they needed support to use the skills they already have.

It takes the same energy to work with a child who has special needs as it does to work with a child who doesn't. And I think the biggest issue for our teachers is they're afraid. They're afraid that they don't know what to do. But they really do know what to do and they need to be reinforced and I think this is where the professional development lacks because we're not reinforcing what they already know and how to work with both sets of children. (Professional Development Provider)

Thus, while diversity has been a key educational issue for decades and standards require that teachers are knowledgeable at individualizing instruction, and preparing children to live in a diverse world, this topic was not necessarily a priority for many of our stakeholders.

Teacher Characteristics

First of all, you have to really, really love children in order to [be a preschool teacher]. And you have to love a lot of them. (Professional Development Provider)

In addition to knowing about children and having a set of teaching skills, some of the participants also identified a particular disposition or personality characteristic that makes someone a good preschool teacher. Here participants were particularly concerned with the caring

and social-emotional aspects of teaching. These attributes were not generally talked about in terms that suggested they could be taught, they were primarily seen as innate or internally located within a particular person. While there was one 2-year teacher educator who gave a response in this category, all of the other responses came from teachers and professional development providers.

The single biggest emotional characteristic of a good teacher was that they love/like children and get joy out of being with young children.

They need to have a passion for preschool. They might be an effective teacher, but not in preschool. They need to have a passion for early childhood. They have to have a love of fun. (Professional Development Provider)

In line with this, stakeholders also thought that preschool teachers needed to be patient, enthusiastic, compassionate, have a sense of humor, and be fit. As one preschool teacher said, “I think you have to have good stamina and pretty good health.”

A second set of personality characteristics involved being flexible and open to new ideas. There was an acknowledgement that preschool is changing rapidly and is different than most teachers’ personal experiences of schooling. Therefore teachers also need to be able to go with the flow, try new things, and be creative. As one professional provider stated, “You are always learning something new. There has to be an openness to learning. I don’t know how you teach that.”

Professionalization is at the heart of the changes in New Jersey’s early childhood system. By mandating that all publicly funded preschool classrooms must have a “qualified teacher” with a BA and specialized training in early childhood education, the Abbott decision effectively validated the argument that preschool teachers are taught not born. In contrast, for professional

development providers, administrators, and some teachers, personality was at least as important as training.

What Kinds of Experiences do Preschool Teachers Need to Have?

...when I first came into this profession, I did not love the kids. I had to learn, I had to grow. The workshops I've been to, the classes you took in college and when you go back to school there's other management courses that you can take to help you focus your mind in a different direction. And that will help you get the love. (Preschool Teacher)

Practical experience or immersion in the field is advocated as a key aspect of learning to teach and continuing to improve one's skills as a teacher. However, classes and workshops tend to be the most dominant method of conveying knowledge to teachers. For example, in one year in the Abbott and ECPA districts of New Jersey, over one thousand workshops were given to preschool teachers (Lobman, Ryan, McLaughlin, in press). It was therefore surprising that apart from this one comment from a teacher, very few participants spoke about the value of classroom learning. The dominant view of most stakeholders in this study, however, was that on-site practical experiences in preschool classrooms are the most effective means of educating teachers.

Onsite experiences. No matter where they worked in the system, all of the stakeholders believed that fieldwork was essential to learning the requisite knowledge and skills because it gave teachers first-hand experience with young children. One professional development provider put it as, "Seeing it-- it's being in there, experiencing what is good quality-- is the best way to learn." Reflecting the importance of first-hand experience several participants said that fieldwork should begin early and at a minimum students should spend a year out in the field.

I think student teaching and classroom experience should be started the minute you declare your major. (Preschool Teacher)

The more time that you can spend in the classroom, even if it is an afternoon or a morning or a week and not only do you learn so much, but you see if it is for you... (Preschool Teacher)

Teachers and policy makers agree that it is the connection that could be made between content taught in a class and practice that is so important about fieldwork.

I mean we have to come back again to what we know from research. If I do a week long intensive workshop on one topic, lets' say inclusion. Teachers will say at the end of it what they need more of is exactly what I just did. Part of it is the process of the putting in the practice; you don't feel confident until you've done that. (Policymaker)

It is like a cooperating teacher but it is more of the laboratory. Ok, that is the laboratory and you still take your coursework but you might visit there once a week, once a morning, you know one morning a week. Then eventually you might work with that person throughout your four years or you might move around. (Preschool Teacher)

For participants, these onsite experiences also offered teachers a chance to work and learn from one another. As one teacher explains:

The district that I work in, I think is excellent, because twice a month, every month, I'm going to training for the curriculum and it is basically just teaching you how to implement it. You get to see other teachers doing it—it is one thing for someone to tell you this is what you need to do, and another thing to have them actually in your classroom working with the children that you have and doing it.

These responses were not only concerned with mentoring, with a more experienced colleague teaching a less experienced one, but also about how when teachers get together they can learn from one another no matter the level of expertise.

What I like to do sometimes, often is to pull teachers from different sites, different backgrounds, different specialties and just have them sit around the table and throw different things that are going on in the classroom around or certain things that might be going on with a parent. Just so that they don't feel that they're the only one. (Professional Development Provider)

This point was also reiterated by one of the policymakers:

What we know, I think, about really high quality professional development for teachers is that they're involved in thinking about it, talking to each other, planning it, occasionally even being part of the instruction process (Policymaker).

On-site experiences, therefore, were powerful for participants because they served multiple purposes that included observing new practices, trying out content learned in classes, and getting a sense of what high quality early education looks like in practice.

Individualized and Ongoing. Reflecting newer models of professional development (Lieberman & Miller 2001), a group of teachers and professional development providers also argued that training and preparation should be both individualized and ongoing.

Wouldn't it be great if the workshops or training was accessible to everyone and they could choose, working with their supervisor, what would best inform their practice? So if I knew something was happening in Newark or Jersey City that was appropriate for one of my teachers, the teacher could access that training. (Professional Development Provider)

Well, I like the fact that the district does provide mandatory courses for us to take, but I would like also to see some courses in which I could have some choice about what it is I want to take. For instance, last year I had two little boys that had severe behavioral problems and I wish that I had a little bit more help in that. If you are going to do more workshops, let's have a workshop on this particular issue. Having some choices about some relevant topics I think would serve me a lot better. (Preschool Teacher)

Individualized for a few participants also meant specifically tailored support for preschool teachers who are working to upgrade their skills and credentials.

It would be nice, like the high school students have the counselor who will teach them and say these are the classes you have and if you're looking for—that personal, I don't know who it would be. But to say, these are the workshops that you've attended so far. These could be useful. (Preschool Teacher)

So you go through this teacher preparation and then you get thrown into the waters with people who have 20 years of experience, but you have all of the same responsibilities that they do. You are expected, day one, to hit the streets and run. I know for me, my first year of teaching, I think about what did I do to those poor children. (4-Year Teacher Educator)

A number of participants also recognized the link between ongoing training, professionalization of the field, and increased compensation. As one preschool teacher stated:

I think to be truly professional; you should always have continuing education. I think in any field, whether you're a lawyer or a doctor. If these teachers want to be respected as true professionals—you know, you hear many jokes and much cynicism about the number of hours we work and what we get paid, etc. I think continuing education is so necessary.

In summary the participants in this study often held similar views to the research literature about what preschool teachers need to know and be able to do. Most of them think that teachers need a good understanding of child development knowledge, that they need to know something about curriculum, and that they develop these kind of expertise through onsite experiences and collaboration with other teachers. Yet at the same time, a group of participants held a somewhat traditional view of early childhood teaching as a set of dispositions, rather than a set of professional skills requiring professional training. While it was certainly recognized that training in diversity is expertise all preschool teachers need to develop, the responses in this area did not reflect the most current views prescribed by national reports and policy standards for teacher education. Many of the responses regarding diversity training continued to perpetuate essentialized views of culture and the outdated view that diversity training is only important in certain contexts, rather than being an integral part of teaching all children.

Creating an Effective System of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

The preparation and professional development of preschool teachers within a state is not solely the province of any one agency or institution. Instead, teacher learning occurs within multiple organizations and involves the interaction of these organizations at a number of different levels. Most states for example, have a Department of Education and a Department of Human Services overseeing services across the state. Similarly, at the level of higher education there are usually 2-year or community colleges and 4-year universities. Operating at the district level are child care centers, public school preschools, and the administrations of each of these. Complicating matters further, there are also agencies that operate at a regional level such as Resource and Referral agencies. Not only must preschool teachers know how to access these agencies but it is also assumed that the individuals working within these agencies have the knowledge to guide teachers to the right agency and program of training. Thus, key to improving the qualifications and expertise of the preschool teaching workforce in any state requires appropriate expertise and resources within agencies and at the same time, coordination and communication between agencies and institutions.

This second set of findings centers on the way the system operates and how it might be improved. We begin by focusing on each level of the professional development and teacher preparation system, particularly what participants perceived was working, as well as the barriers they saw as hindering improvement to the system at each level. Partnerships between these differing levels are then examined before concluding with recommendations for policy and practice.

The State

When the state legislature committed support to implementing the Abbott decisions, there was a renegotiation of some of the responsibilities and activities of early childhood education between the Departments of Human Services and Education. While the Department of Human Services maintained its responsibility as the lead agency for child care including Head Start and administered various training supports for teachers such as the scholarship program and the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education through its Office of Early Childhood Education took the main leadership role for implementation of high quality preschool programs. This meant putting in place various structures (e.g. master teachers, preschool expectations) to support district staff to improve the quality of curriculum and instruction as well as helping districts to develop professional development plans that would lead to a cadre of qualified teachers. Delineating state expectations for teacher certification, reviewing and issuing teaching licenses, and monitoring the content of P-3 teacher certification programs, while not directly the responsibility of the Office of Early Childhood, are also administered by the Department of Education.

For policymakers, administrators and professional development providers, the leadership and advocacy of the State Department of Education was important in creating and sustaining a high quality system of teacher development. Most of the participants attributed the success of the system to the work of the office of Early Childhood Education and the leadership of Dr. Ellen Frede, Assistant to the Commissioner for Early Childhood Education.

I think having someone like Ellen at the state has been huge. She's got the early child background and she's an advocate for what these children really need. And someone with an early childhood background that is up there at the top and it's starting to weed its way down. (Master Teacher)

And she's spent time in a classroom. That gave me enormous respect for her. That's

someone I can talk to and listen to. She's trying to bring more public awareness to early childhood. (Child Care Director)

One policymaker provided insight into some of the initiatives developed under Dr. Frede's leadership that were contributing to more responsive professional development for preschool teachers.

We've put on paper and in regulation what the qualifications have to be. We have done an intensive training for master teachers, which they can't pass unless they have a portfolio that is acceptable to our reviewers. Well short term I think we've set our priorities for this year - English language learners, inclusion, directors [are all areas that need work]. I picked this just by looking through our professional development priorities. (Policymaker)

The leadership at the state level for one professional development provider had resulted in recognition of the uniqueness of early childhood education.

I'm glad that the core standards have been adapted for early childhood, as well. We're no longer working off of the same K-12 standards. (Professional Development Provider)

While stakeholders tended to view the leadership provided through the Office of Early Childhood positively, this leadership did not necessarily translate into good experiences with other aspects of the state system. These concerns also tended to be particular to some stakeholder groups more than others.

For higher education faculty members, there was some displeasure about the level of state control over teacher education programs. In particular they reported feeling constrained by the thirty-credit limit the state places on programs of education and the difficulty changing programs once they had received state approval:

Thirty credits, 36 credits, is not enough preparation and while I agree with a well educated teacher, meaning a liberally educated teacher, I do think that needs to be spread a little bit more on the side of pedagogy. (2-year Teacher Educator)

So we want to make that change [to our program]. The approval process means

redesigning the whole thing. You've got to submit the whole freakin' thing and you know frankly it has been sitting on my desk. I keep looking at it now and I say I will have to do it for the 10 competencies anyway so I'll just wait until I have to do it for that. In the meantime I should've been offering that class this semester, but I'm not doing it because it's not approved by the state. (4-year Teacher Educator)

Faculty members, professional development providers, administrators and teachers also raised concerns about the scholarship system administered through the Professional Development Center. In general it was agreed that these financial resources were crucial to enabling many preschool teachers to improve their credentials.

I think another great thing was the NJ Professional Development Center [Scholarships]. I don't know where our Abbott teachers would be without the help, the funding. (Professional Development Provider)

However, the bureaucracy associated with obtaining scholarship money was problematic to many of the participants. These complaints primarily focused on the need for teachers to reapply for the program every year. One 4-year teacher educator called the system a "pain in the neck" while another teacher educator said:

Every semester you have to deal with the student that gets a letter from the registrar that says they're being kicked out because the professional development center hasn't paid them. They put them on the list and then they forget to apply or they apply late or they took an incomplete from last semester therefore they don't have a grade to submit to their thing and it snowballs that way. (4-year Teacher Educator)

Teachers also asserted that the system for receiving the scholarship money could be streamlined and made more efficient.

If you already are going and applying for your scholarship, if you've been consistent, why don't they think you are going to keep doing it? (Preschool Teacher)

In addition to problems with gaining the support necessary to complete a Bachelors degree, teachers and administrators also focused on the bureaucracy involved in getting information about certification and processing the necessary paperwork. According to these

participants the process was characterized by an inability to reach the appropriate office or official, a lack of consistent information about what was required, and rigidity that ended up keeping qualified people from being able to receive the proper certification. Many of the teachers had first-hand stories about how confusing and inefficient the process of dealing with the state licensing office had been.

I found it extremely difficult just sort of going through the maze of what it is I needed to do. That was very difficult for me...This is a nightmare—trying to figure out what to do...You know and even just the response you get from the phone calls. Who did you send this paperwork to? Why isn't this in Trenton? Why are you sending this to me? Why didn't you send it to the county? (Preschool Teacher)

I had a terrible, terrible experience just getting through the state, getting through the paperwork, back and forth, not being able to read transcripts, being asked to provide certain letters and documentation, waiting for responses from the answering machine. There has to be a better way...Maybe they think they clearly defined everything, but I don't think that it really is. (Preschool Teacher)

Administrators and child care directors said that the rules and regulations were constantly changing and that this caused confusion amongst both teachers and administrators. This was particularly disturbing given that a large number of teachers who were trying to make it through the system were non-traditional students who were not experienced in navigating the educational system.

Very frustrating. Especially for the non-traditional. I have teachers who are even older than I am and they've been doing this so many years. And they're just utterly frustrated. "I know I'm a good teacher. Why do I have to jump through these hoops and where are they and why do they keep moving them on me? (Child care Director)

The overall sentiment was that the bureaucracy at the state level was a barrier to teachers being able to increase their credentials and that the need to navigate the system took time away from actually improving the quality of the early childhood programs.

Thus, despite the recognition of the work Dr. Frede and her office had done to improve

the system, there was also an overall dissatisfaction with the support and guidance being offered at the state level. Participants reported that confusion and a lack of coordination and communication at the state level had left teachers, administrators, and teacher educators unable to navigate the bureaucracy in a timely fashion.

Higher Education

Because my office was handling the preparation program approvals and we had zero in June and 20 by August and by the end of the year we had 28 programs at different levels. So I think that spoke to the commitment of the 4-year schools to do this even though they really didn't have warning for their budgets or anything else. (State Policymaker)

Prior to the Abbott ruling there was no independent system of early childhood teacher preparation in New Jersey. Rather, early childhood was integrated into departments of elementary education, home economics, or child and family studies. As a result of the Abbott mandate, early childhood faculty were called upon to quickly develop new P-3 teacher certification programs and, as the opening quote illustrates, these efforts were recognized by state leaders.

While participants were pleased that the system was up and running, several of them expressed concern that in the rush to respond to the court mandate there had been insufficient attention paid to the quality of teachers being prepared through this system as this 4- year teacher educator explains:

In terms of the outcomes for teachers, we said all of these people, they have to get certified, they've got to get into your programs, you would never have let that person into your program in the past. You wouldn't want them teaching your child.

One of the things that struck me about the P-3, the alternate route in particular has been that when it got started, and with the urgency to get it started and with the eagerness to incorporate any student who was in a community program and needed to complete the degree requirements that the admissions were very open...

Teacher educators felt particularly challenged in working with a student population that they saw as being unprepared for college level work. Respondents from community colleges commented on the difficulty students have getting through readings, passing core courses, and the poor quality of their assignments. They particularly identified the challenges they face with students/teachers who need to develop their English language skills.

Yes, plus their English language skills are not models for primary language and English speaking children. So I think that there are still some problems that are left over in assuring a truly highly qualified teaching preschool course.... (2-Year Teacher Educator)

Overall, the teacher educators struggled with thinking of ways they could accommodate the particular needs of their students without lowering the standards they believed were necessary to having a high quality workforce.

I think we are constantly talking about what we can do better. How we can make accommodations and I don't mean that in the sense of lowering our standards, but really looking at who our students are and how we can help them, but I personally know that students don't take advantage of that. I guess that it is just an area where we need to keep working on how you bring the students and our perspectives together. (2-year Teacher Educator)

I support of course being responsive and I think that we need to address the needs of who the students are that are coming into our program, but if we don't have standards, if we let everybody in and we let them all take all of our classes and do that in the interest of helping that person keep his job or in the interest of getting this person a job, than I think that is a disservice to children. (4-year Teacher Educator)

In response to these concerns, some institutions had initiated programs to address the particular linguistic and academic skills of non-traditional students. For example 2- and 4- year professors spoke about writing skills programs and assistance for preschool teachers for whom English is not their first language.

Actually we call it ESP, which is English for special purposes. We are trying to create this ESP program which is a non-credit program for modified alternate route teachers. That is to help these teachers to be more fluent, more literate, better in general

conversation with not only their children, but with other professionals in the field
(Teacher Educator, 4-year College)

In addition to addressing the particular learning needs of the P-3 students, attention was also paid to the needs of those women entering academic studies while also maintaining full-time jobs. One community college professor talked about using a flexible approach to scheduling so that classes were available more than once a year.

We've tried really hard, just because it is children's literature and it was offered Monday at 5pm last semester, we try to vary it each semester so we're not locking people into or locking them out of times. We already know when our schedule is going to be for Spring 2005 and the idea is that you know what your degree rotation is and theoretically you should be planning ahead. I meet every other week with our head counselor and then she meets every other week with all of the advisors and we're trying to be on the same page.
(Teacher Educator, 2-year College)

Both 2- and 4-year professors also spoke about hiring additional advising staff to help teachers navigate various program and university requirements. One 4-year teacher educator said that she "found [it] to be just immensely helpful to have the advisement staff on board" because she was able to meet regularly with them to ensure quality control.

One non-traditional student spoke of the importance of these various supports and especially the accessibility of faculty.

Research, my God. You have to write. I was afraid. I want to drop the class. But the professor, he was great. I could go to the office 20 times. If I'm confused. Ok. He helped me. No question about it. All the research, everything. The computer. He helped me a lot. When I was, I don't know. I couldn't find any research or data. He went to the computer and he found it for me. That's what I need. Then you work on your own. (Preschool Teacher)

Yet, despite the hiring of new faculty made possible by the allocation of state funds for this purpose, those in higher education also asserted that these resources were insufficient to meet the demand for their programs. One four-year teacher educator pointed out that even when

they were allowed to hire more full-time faculty, the disparity between faculty salaries and those of potential faculty in the districts who earn significantly more made it difficult to recruit and hire qualified new faculty.

The other thing that I look at in terms of our capacity is, and Abbott has contributed to this to a certain degree, probably more so than anything else with the salaries and what is happening. If I want to hire somebody that is a good teacher and has been doing things for a while and wants to come to my university, they have to take a pay cut. (4-Year Teacher Educator)

In 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, this lack of early childhood expertise manifested itself in two ways. First, there were few individuals with the needed training and knowledge to be able to teach classes. For one professor working in a 2-year institution of higher education, this issue was particularly evident when it came to considerations of diversity and culture.

The problem with faculty, or the issue with faculty whose training predates any of this notion of a more pluralistic society is that they don't seem to appreciate that there were cultural contributions of cultures other than Euro-American influence and don't seem to make accommodations for that in the curriculum. That is across the board. (2-Year Teacher Educator)

The lack of expertise meant that it was also difficult to find qualified individuals to take on particular tasks for the university whether it was teaching classes, organizing student teaching placements, or supervising out in the field. This same teacher educator speaks to this concern:

Because of our limited full time capacity and our need to use so many adjuncts, most of our evening courses are taught by adjuncts and not full time. They are as qualified as what I can get them for what we pay. Well, pedagogically they are qualified. They have that master's degree in early childhood education or a related field, but they are not as fully informed. They have day jobs all of them. They are not as fully trained.

A teacher educator at a 2-year school explains some of the potential losses to students because of the limited human resources in community colleges:

In the community college system, we don't staff according to the number of students that we have, we staff according to our graduates. So, as I've already stated, I have over 600 students in the program and there are three full-time[faculty]. They [ratios] are really frightening that I don't even teach full load now, because I am doing so much more coordinating and administrative work. And so we only have two and a third faculty for that. And we end up doing an awful lot of advising as well too.

In summary, while stakeholders mentioned pockets of success in the higher education system in the form of support services for non-traditional students, there were also concerns about the need to maintain standards and the variability of quality that appeared to stem from a lack of expertise on the part of some faculty members.

District Level

As mentioned previously a series of supports were institutionalized at the district and child care level to ensure that preschool teachers could upgrade their qualifications and improve the quality of their practice. These supports came in the form of hiring early childhood supervisors and master teachers as well as providing additional resources for professional development.

While a good master teacher was obviously an asset, many stakeholders raised concerns with the expertise of the master teachers employed by districts. One policymaker explains:

Again anecdotally, there is all sorts of criticism that I get about who gets selected to be master teachers, what they bring to the table, and whether or not they are the right people to help our practicing classroom teachers. So if we're talking about professional development as well as teacher preparation, somehow there needs to be a lot more thought given to quality control.

This quality control was also a problem for classroom teachers:

In Jersey City, you can be a reading recovery teacher and apply to be a master teacher, become a master teacher and have less experience than the teachers. (Preschool Teacher)

Similarly master teachers or other mentors were spread so thinly that teachers said they

rarely saw someone who might be able to assist them to improve their practices.

We have master teachers in Jersey City, but they're spending more time in the 3-year-old programs. We never see our master teacher and we know that we've been doing things wrong in High Scope. They just don't have the manpower. If the children are happy and things seem to be going well, they just leave you alone because they feel that they have bigger problems in other areas. (Preschool Teacher)

One of the child care directors saw problems with the way master teachers in her district approached the work of mentoring:

And as for modeling when you talk about mentorship. I would like to see them come in and instead of showing a video to the staff, to get into the classroom and show it to them. That it can be done.

Similarly for teachers in our sample this lack of quality was also apparent in the professional development they received. A number of them reported on experiences where a leader of a workshop did not have particular skills or expert knowledge about educating young children.

It's different, too, when you have a presenter who has not been in child care. They may have never taught a child. They are professionals from different areas. (Preschool Teacher)

Moreover, some teachers had requested particular kinds of training and had not received it possibly because it was not possible for the district to find suitably qualified presenters. These topics were mostly concerned with diversity issues.

One of the things I know I lack is working with inner-city children. First of all, I understand some Spanish, which a lot of my children are. But, I don't know finger plays in Spanish; I don't know many songs in Spanish. I lack that end of it. We have been requesting workshops in that for quite a while and we can't seem to get anyone to do them for us. (Preschool Teacher)

We're having workshops just saying get ready, you're going to have inclusion students, you know. But in terms of training, no. (Preschool Teacher)

Those stakeholders, who worked in child care, were also mixed in their reviews of the leadership

within child care centers. On the one hand, the leadership of these centers was cited as an important support for teachers attempting to upgrade their qualifications as this teacher explains:

My center's beautiful. If I'm in school, sometimes I don't even have to come in early. If I have a class on Wednesday that starts at 4:30 and I get off at 4:30, I might just leave at 4:15. There's no making up. I'm not coming in at 8:15. The director is very supportive and she understands.

One child care director relayed how she sought out various funding sources in addition to Abbott monies so that teachers could access training opportunities.

And we do have a commitment to it. I have the advantage of funding that is outside of Abbott and outside of DHS. I need to have a lot of subs if I'm going to let these people go to school and I need funding for that. You want to support the teachers. Ultimately you have a fantastic staff if they stay with you.

While these directors stood out as exemplars in providing support for their staff, to access and participate in training opportunities, stakeholders also spoke about how a lack of encouragement on the part of many directors was a major barrier to improving the expertise of teaching staff.

All too often when we get our evaluations back the staff will be very excited about different things they've learned and changes they'd like to see and they'll always comment, I wish the director could have been part of this. Or often times, when we do the first steps and we have a consultant go into the center they will suggest changes and unless the director is really open to those changes, everything goes right back to the way it was. (Professional Development Provider)

The perceived lack of expertise held by many directors was also a concern raised by several policymakers as the following conversation illustrates:

I don't understand. If we put teachers through a slam-bang crash program to get a BA, why aren't we doing that for the directors? (Policy Advisor)

The policymaker group recognized that directors did not have the same expertise that was being expected of teachers and mentioned that procedures were being put into place to raise their

qualifications. “The next step, and we’ve been talking that the next step is definitely to shore up the directors,” stated one policymaker.

For many stakeholders, problems with leadership were not limited to child care centers but were also an issue in terms of the district administration. According to these individuals, district leaders had little understanding of the education of young children and therefore often responded inappropriately as this professional development provider explains:

I’m on the early childhood advisory council for Jersey City and I’m finding that a lot of the principals of early childhood in-district programs don’t have a clue what early childhood is. They’re still afraid of anything and they can’t seem to change that mindset even though they have teachers and supervisors. The other principals don’t have a clue and they don’t want to change anything.

One public school preschool teacher likened her role to that of a translator:

I’ve spent a lot of time, even today, translating to an administrator, why this is going on in my room, you know, what is happening here, why, you know (laughter), why a fire drill during naptime is not a good idea (laughter), you know and just things like that.

Thus even with additional resources aimed at improving the expertise of preschool teachers; the quality of these resources was variable and sometimes further limited by a lack of understanding about early education on the part of district leadership.

Interactions between Levels of the System

A system is not the sum of its isolated parts but is dependent on the intersections between institutions, agencies, and people. These interactions are particularly critical for preschool teachers as improving their qualifications can range from starting a CDA to improving one’s expertise through various trainings and professional development. Participants in this study were aware of the importance of these interactions as they spoke about articulation agreements between 2- and 4- year higher education institutions, linkages between higher education and

professional development agencies, and collaborations between the public schools and child care centers within districts.

Articulation agreements. Given than many non-traditional students start their college career at community colleges, but must continue on to a 4-year school to complete their P-3 requirements; it was not surprising that relationships between these two institutions were discussed by all of the higher education faculty.

The participants from the 2-year colleges were most concerned with helping to make the transition to a four-year college smooth for their students. One two-year teacher educator described the success she had in creating a “transfer resource center” in collaboration with the local 4-year college.

The transfer counselor as well as the assistant director of admissions will come to any class that I invite them to. My students who are in those particular classes are in their last semester or their second to last semester and anticipating transfer and that is very scary to them. They have finally found themselves to be comfortable on the campus and they're close to being successful that they don't want to leave this pretty little campus. So to have somebody come from the university to assure that the road is paved and its ready for them and to give them things in their hands and to give them their cards and their telephone numbers, it was miraculous to watch the transformation of the students sitting there. Their shoulders finally relaxed. They felt optimistic about the transfer process. (2-Year Teacher Educator)

This teacher educator also said that this type of collaboration included a strong articulation agreement, which provided the support needed for 2-year community college students to stay in school and receive their BA and certification in a timely fashion.

She [Dean at the 4-year school] has been very creative in how those credits are assigned. So, initially she assigned 6 credits of the pedagogy to the 30 credits and out of the other 6, so that it established a second major for the transferring students. As long as my students knew that they weren't losing credits and it would establish a second major, they're great.

While this 2-year teacher educator provided an example of an articulation “success story”, overall articulation (or the lack of articulation) was discussed as a barrier by all of the participants from higher education. Not surprisingly, there was a major difference between how the 2- and 4-year teacher educators saw the issue and what they recommended as a solution. From the 2-year perspective there was a need for more collaboration and cooperation. Their comments reflected optimism that better articulation agreements were possible.

But I still think that we can have a nice marriage of what the two years do and what the four years do and quite frankly many of our students can't afford to go to a four year university for 4 years, either maturity wise, financially, or logistically. We tend to have greater diversity on our campuses and I'm constantly hearing four year universities saying- oh we love your students. They are so well prepared. Ok, then what are we going to do about it? (2-Year Teacher Educator)

On the other hand, the professors from the 4-year schools generally believed that the 2-year schools were unrealistic in their assessment of what was possible in terms of articulation.

I think that the model that [4-year University] has where they accept as gen.ed. So they are coming in having met their 60 credits of gen. ed. That is the model to push for because there is no way in hell any of us...are going to give a community college, 15 of your credits and they are going to come to you and take one class and student teaching and graduate. That is unrealistic to think that kind of articulation is going to happen...(Teacher Educator, 4-year College)

Faculty at the 4-year level also pointed out that since they were the ones ultimately responsible for certification, they were reluctant to be flexible.

So because [the 4-year University] is still going to be the one that is issuing the degree at the end, you still have to have a certain amount of accountability on what it is. It is still your university that is on the line and-- You know there are a lot of good classes that are happening at community colleges and there is no question about that, but it's not going to happen. (Teacher Educator, 4-year College)

In general, the gap between the two sets of faculty did not provide much evidence that things were likely to change in the near future.

Partnerships between higher education and professional development. It is now widely recognized that regardless of how much experience an educator has, learning to teach well is an ongoing activity. Not only is it important that teachers have opportunities to build on their training experiences, but if this training is to be effective it must also be linked to practice and the contexts of teachers' daily work (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). While many stakeholders recognized that one way to bridge the gap between theory and practice was partnering between districts and universities, few reported that such partnerships were taking place. One exception was reported by a teacher working in the southern area of the state:

Our school district actually offered the P-3 classes from Rowan right at our school. So, actually now I'm in the process of getting my P-3 certification. But our school will offer it right there for those teachers in the preschool setting.

Teacher educators and professional development providers said that if and when such partnerships did occur they tended to be a localized effort that often relied on the initiative of one or two individuals.

And it was only because I was an adjunct and worked for a training organization that there was really any connection. We've since had some connection, but we don't have the connection that I would have liked to see in terms of going into the classrooms and perhaps doing some classes with early childhood development. (Administrator)

One reason given for the lack of partnerships taking place was that those in institutions of higher education were waiting for districts to invite them to work with their early childhood staff:

There has to be some kind of a trust and confidence from the district to say, "yeah, we really do need, we're really, you know our goal is quality, whatever that means, our goal is to prepare excellent early childhood professionals in the three-year old classes and the four-year old classes moving onto the five-year old classes. The district needs to give the four-year institutions a real open door to come into those centers and, again, develop a system of professional development. (4-year Teacher Educator)

For policymakers the lack of coordination of professional development between institutions of higher education and school districts was a missed opportunity for creating real change.

The continually inadequate linkages between public education and higher education, which I think is essential, not only for program quality, but for teacher preparation quality. Both to identify what is going to be needed over the next several years and to adjust programs so we don't have this laissez-faire system. (State Policy Advisor)

Collaborations between districts and child care. The enactment of the Abbott decision in many districts brought child care centers into the public education system whereas before they had operated as two distinct providers of education within the same geographical region. Despite the forging of these new partnerships, many of the stakeholders identified a lack of coordination and cooperation between the districts and contracting child care providers. The child care administrators and teachers complained that the district personnel did not want to coordinate with them because they assumed that anything connected to the public school system was superior in quality to the work being done within the child care system.

Our UCCA tri-county does provide training, however, our district doesn't want to recognize those credit hours ... There is a misconception that if it's not taken with them [public schools] its not as high quality if its elsewhere. (Child Care Director)

We were told...even for mentoring purposes they were saying that training only can count as mentoring if it's done in district. But the EIRC (training provided through resource and referral agency) I cannot count that towards your mentoring hours and that really upset me. (Administrator)

One child care director expressed her anger at what she saw as a lack of respect on the part of the districts:

However, I can feel myself have that knee jerk reaction of there they go, the school districts again kind of undermining the professionalism and professional development of people who have been in early care and education for many, many, many years and could speak to these topics handily. Basically being put off to the side. (Child Care Director)

This lack of understanding also resulted in professional development being offered by the districts at times that did not fit with centers' schedules. As a consequence, teachers missed out on training opportunities as this teacher explains:

I don't have a problem with paying the \$32, but they don't accommodate the teachers in the centers, whereas the teachers in the public schools get out at 2:30 or 2:45, the thing starts at 3:00. I don't get off until 4:00. She's [the director] not going to grant us extra time off to go to these functions, so by the time we get there it's 4:20, the food's been served, there's nowhere to sit, and you're walking over people's feet.

For one policymaker, the limited coordination meant that there was no real system in place to ensure that the expertise of preschool teachers within a district was carefully being monitored and built upon.

...the places that I'm most familiar with there is still too much contention between community providers and public school so that there is no seamless development of plan and assessment of need. So that to the degree some higher education stuff is going on, either it is going on with the district and maybe a few favorite providers, but it is not systemic. (State Policy Advisor)

While those concerned with child care in some way found districts lacking in their efforts to coordinate professional development, stakeholders who were working as professional development trainers or within resource and referral agencies recounted how they stepped in and took up this coordinating role.

I think another important thing is—I'm almost like a guidance counselor. A lot of times directors don't have time to deal with the paperwork and help the teachers. And be on top of the changes. Just being a point person that teachers know they can go to. That's all I'm there for and that means a lot to them. They trust me that I'm going to do what's good for them...I contact the people I think I need to. (Professional Development Provider)

For one professional development provider the development of training opportunities that resonated with district plans meant that resources could be shared to go further rather than wasted.

Another thing we try to do, money is always the big obstacle. We try to team up with other early childhood agencies that provide training. We'll set a contract on a yearly basis and we'll pay them to do maybe 20 workshops throughout the year and then we'll open it up to the public. So, if agencies do similar things like that, maybe we can make the most of the money. (Professional Development Provider)

In summary, the responses of stakeholders indicate that while headway has definitely been made in the creation of a system of early childhood teacher preparation and professional development, barriers still exist to creating the type of system that stakeholders believe is needed to improve the quality of teaching across the state. These barriers include a lack of resources and expertise, an unwillingness or inability to work together due to territoriality and mistrust, and an entrenched bureaucracy that makes it difficult to get things done.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to elicit the perspectives of various stakeholders working within early childhood education on how to improve the preparation of preschool teachers so that all children are educated by someone who is both qualified and knowledgeable. During these focus group conversations, participants reflected on the content and form of current training opportunities as well as the overall P-3 system within which teacher education and professional development takes place in New Jersey. As a way of summarizing the depth and breadth of these perspectives in this concluding section, we examine the points of agreement and tension between stakeholders. We begin this discussion with an examination of the content and delivery of training, followed by a system-wide perspective. These summaries are then used as a jumping off point to articulate recommendations for action.

Content and Form of Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

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

these points of agreement were three areas where stakeholders diverged in their views about the content and delivery of teacher education and training opportunities.

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

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

some space must be made in the curriculum for these aspects of teaching in addition to the focus on diversity issues, foundational knowledge, and curriculum content.

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

The System of Preschool Teacher Development

I was right at the beginning that all those people that are out there working in early care situations, if given the resources and time could be those BA degreed, certified teachers. It's been very heartening to see the numbers of people that have come through and met the mandate. (State Policy Maker)

As this quote indicates, participants were aware and proud of the fact that a system of preschool preparation and professional development had been created in New Jersey in a relatively short period of time. It was recognized that this system was both preparing large numbers of certified teachers and providing those teachers with an astounding amount of professional development. Stakeholders identified pockets of strength at all levels of the system, including the leadership of Ellen Frede at the state level, the implementation of special programs to support non-traditional students at the colleges and universities, and the time and resources put aside for professional development in the districts and childcare centers. Many participants,

whether they were teachers, professional development providers, directors, teacher educators or policy makers recognized that the programs that had been created were improving the quality of early childhood teaching in New Jersey and were therefore benefiting some of the state's poorest children.

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

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

A second barrier identified by stakeholders, was the perceived variability in the quality of teacher preparation programs and training opportunities. Stakeholders argued for the need to

maintain high expectations or standards for the field to ensure that every classroom was staffed by a high quality teacher. While standards were a concern at district and state levels, both policymakers and higher education professors stressed the need for high academic expectations at the colleges and universities. To ensure higher expectations meant that faculty and their institutions would have to make changes and would have to be more stringent about who was accepted into their programs and what was required of them for certification and graduation.

For other teacher educators, a key way to begin improving the system was not only to raise the standards about who and who does not enter and succeed in teacher preparation programs, but to also create capacity in the system to support these teachers through an increase in the numbers of leaders who are early childhood specialists. As one 4-year college participant so aptly puts it, “We’re not building leaders. We’re not building educators. We’re not building the capacity.” Policymakers, on the other hand, stressed the need to regulate higher education by requiring certification programs to be nationally accredited and putting more stringent codes in place that require programs to include particular topics as part of their coursework.

The final barrier to creating a high quality workforce is the lack of partnerships occurring between universities and school districts, and between 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education, as well as the various agencies and individuals providing professional development. Every stakeholder was able to identify areas where the system or “non-system”, as it has been called, could be improved through partnerships, and continuity within and across components of the system.

Recommendations

Although the findings of these focus groups are limited to a small number of participants who cannot represent all stakeholders concerned with early childhood education, their experiences of the current system of teacher education in New Jersey provide some important insights into how to begin improving ways in which preschool teachers are educated.

Our first recommendation is that there be a communications campaign that disseminates information about the knowledge base required to be an effective preschool teacher. While these expectations are embodied in national recommendations and state standards (Neuman & Roskos, 2005; Hyson, 2003) for early childhood teacher education, our findings suggest that the ways the knowledge base has changed has yet to become part of common everyday discourse about teaching young children. This communications campaign would help to educate both the public and those in early childhood education about the importance of teachers knowing how to teach content knowledge in developmentally appropriate ways, as well as how to educate children from diverse backgrounds.

A second and related recommendation is that those training preschool teachers receive professional development themselves in diversity, current policies and standards, and content area pedagogy. To be effective, this training should involve some kind of self-study to ensure that every teacher educator and professional development provider receives the type of training she or he needs to be both current and effective to those that they are responsible for training. One starting point for this work would be to bring teacher educators together along with the syllabi for their courses to discuss how they approach the teaching of particular topics and the strategies they use to assist students with difficult content. A second avenue for exploration would be to examine exemplary programs in other states to elicit ideas and new perspectives.

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

Finally, to ensure that collaborations between various levels of the system do not occur by happenstance or through individualized action alone, it is recommended that a state level coordinating agency be developed in conjunction with the Professional Development Center, the Department of Education, The Department of Human Services and the Commission for Higher Education. One job of this agency would be to promote and support partnerships between agencies at different levels of the system. This coordinating agency could serve as a clearinghouse for partnerships and collaborations between and across levels of the professional development and teacher preparation system. In doing so this agency would ensure that the system as a whole is developing programs and services that meet the needs of the preschool workforce and the children that they serve.

In sum, if we are committed to encouraging teachers to build on their knowledge, improve their repertoire of pedagogies, and be constantly inquiring into their practice, then all of us --teacher educators, administrators, and professional development providers --must begin to recognize and act on our weaknesses and work across our differences to create the system that is in our vision but still too far out of reach.

REFERENCES

- Abbott v. Burke*, 153 N.J. 480 (1998).
- Abbott v. Burke*, 163 N.J. 95 (2000).
- Ackerman, D. J. (2004). States' efforts in improving the qualifications of early care and education teachers. *Educational Policy*, 18, 311-337.
- Blair, C. (2002). School readiness. *American Psychologist*, 57, 111-127.
- Bowman, B. T., Donovan, M. S., & Burns, M. S. (Eds.). (2001). *Eager to learn: Educating our preschoolers*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Bredekamp, S. (1996). Early childhood education. In J. Sikula, T. Buttery, & E. Grayton (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 323-347). New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.
- Bredekamp, S. & Copple, C. (1997). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs* (Revised. Ed.). Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. (2001). Beyond certainty: Taking an inquiry stance on practice. In A. Lieberman L. Miller (Eds.), *Teachers caught in the action: professional development that matters*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Dwyer, M. C., Chait, R., & McKee, P. (2000). *Building strong foundations for early learning: Guide to high-quality early childhood education programs*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service.
- Early, D. M., & Winton, P. J. (2001). Preparing the workforce: Early childhood teacher preparation at 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education. *Early Childhood Research*

- Quarterly*, 16, 285-306.
- Goffin, S. (1996). Child development knowledge in early childhood teacher preparation: Assessing the relationship. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 11, 117-133.
- Honig, A. & Hirallal, A. (1998). *Which counts more for excellence in childcare staff: Years in service, education level or ECE coursework?* Paper presented at the Annual Quality Infant/Toddler Caregiving Workshop, Syracuse, NY.
- Howes, C. (1997). Children's experiences in center-based child care as a function of teacher background and adult:child ratio. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 43, 404-425.
- Hyson, M. (Ed.). (2003). *Preparing early childhood professionals: NAEYC's standards for programs*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Isenberg, J. (2000). The state of the art in early childhood professional preparation. In National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education & U.S. Department of Education & Office of Educational Research and Improvement (Eds.), *New teachers for a new century: The future of early childhood professional preparation* (pp. 17-58). Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- Katz, L. & Goffin, S. (1990). Issues in the preparation of teachers of young children. In B. Spodek & O.N. Saracho (Eds.), *Yearbook in early childhood education, Vol. 1: Early childhood teacher preparation* (pp. 192-208). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lieberman, A., & Miller, L. (Eds.) (2001). *Teachers caught in the action: Professional development that matters*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Lobman, C., Ryan, S., & McLaughlin, J. (in press). Reconstructing teacher education to prepare qualified preschool teachers: Lessons from New Jersey. *Early Childhood Research and Practice*.
- Lobman, C., Ryan, S., McLaughlin, J., & Ackerman, D. (2004). *Educating preschool teachers: Mapping the teacher preparation and professional development system in New Jersey*. New Brunswick, NJ: Foundation for Child Development.
- McCarthy, J. (1990). The content of early childhood teacher education programs: Pedagogy. In B. Spodek & O. Saracho (Eds.). *Yearbook in early childhood education: early childhood teacher preparation* (pp. 82-101). New York: TC Press.
- Neuman, S. & Roskos, K. (2005). The state of state pre-kindergarten standards. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 20, 125-145.
- Ryan, S., & Ackerman, D. J. (2004). *Getting qualified: A report on the efforts of preschool teachers in New Jersey's Abbott districts to improve their qualifications*. New Brunswick, NJ: NIEER. Available at <http://nieer.org/resources/research/GettingQualified.pdf>.
- Ryan, S. & Grieshaber, S. (2005). Shifting to developmental to postmodern practices in early childhood teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56, 34-45.
- Saluja, G., Early, D. M., & Clifford, R. M. (2002). Demographic characteristics of early childhood teachers and structural elements of early care and education in the United States. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, 4(1), online journal available at <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v4n1/saluja.html>.
- Spodek, B. & Saracho, O. (1990). Preparing early childhood teachers. In B. Spodek & O.N.

- Saracho (Eds.), *Yearbook in early childhood education, Vol. 1: Early childhood teacher preparation* (pp. 23-44). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stott, F. & Bowman, B. (1996). Child development knowledge: A slippery base for practice. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 11*, 169-183.
- Whitebook, M. (2003). *Early education quality: Higher teacher qualifications for better learning environments - a review of the literature*. Berkeley, CA: Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Berkeley.