



Center for Research  
on Women

Stone Center

WELLESLEY CENTERS FOR WOMEN

## PREPARING THE EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE WORKFORCE: THE CAPACITY OF MASSACHUSETTS' INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

On July 1, 2005, the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care began work on the goals set forward by the Massachusetts legislature, including:

*[to] oversee the development and implementation of a workforce development system designed to support the education, training and compensation of the early education and care workforce, including all center, family child care, infant, toddler, preschool and school-age providers. - Chapter 205 of the Acts of 2004, Section 3(a)*

Research shows that early education and care programs are important preparation for young children, and that well-trained, qualified teachers and providers are necessary for programs to promote children's development. In an extensive review of the state-of-the-field, the National Research Council (1998) found that "both formal education levels and recent, specialized training in child development have been found quite consistently to be associated with high-quality interactions and children's development in center-based, family day care and even in in-home sitter arrangements." In Massachusetts, in a series of studies of early education and care programs in centers, public schools and family child care homes, teacher/provider education was found to be a strong and consistent predictor of the quality of the program.

The goal of this study is to contribute to the development of a comprehensive professional development system in Massachusetts by providing up-to-date research on the current early education and care (EEC) workforce serving children birth through school age and on the capacity of Massachusetts Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) to prepare the EEC workforce.

#### SECTION I. CAPACITY OF MASSACHUSETTS IHEs TO PREPARE THE EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE WORKFORCE

Massachusetts currently provides early education and care for children birth through 14 years (16 years with special needs) through a mixed delivery system. This delivery system includes centers, family child care homes, public school preschool programs, Early Head Start and Head Start programs, school-age programs and youth-serving programs. The early education and care workforce includes teachers and assistant teachers working in classrooms, paraprofessionals and aides and family child care providers, as well as program administrators, staff in Resource and Referral agencies, early intervention programs, home visitors, health and mental health services, etc. In assessing the capacity of Massachusetts IHEs to prepare the EEC workforce, we have focused on classroom teachers (in centers, public preschool

---

<sup>1</sup> Executive Summary of *Preparing the Early Education and Care Workforce: The Capacity of Massachusetts' Institutions of Higher Education*. Nancy L. Marshall, Julie Dennehy, Elizabeth Starr and Wendy Wagner Robeson, Center for Research on Women, Wellesley College. 2005. Funding provided by the National Institute for Early Education Research, with additional funding from Strategies for Children, the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation, United Way of Massachusetts Bay, and The Boston Foundation.

WELLESLEY CENTERS FOR WOMEN

classrooms, and Head Start programs), family child care providers, and teachers/group leaders in school-age programs.

## HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE PRESCHOOL WORKFORCE

### ***Characteristics of the Current Workforce Serving 3-5 Year Olds<sup>2</sup>***

- **Massachusetts Current Service Delivery System:** A total of 10,303 programs provide early education and care for 3-5 year olds. Over half (58%) of 3-5 year-olds receiving early education and care are in EEC-licensed centers.
- **Workforce:** Estimating one lead teacher per preschool classroom, there are 6,822 teachers in center, Head Start and public school preschool classrooms, as well as 7,369 family child care providers.
- **Education:** Among classroom teachers, 40% hold a Bachelors or graduate degree in ECE, 21% hold an Associates degree in ECE, and 4% hold a CDA. Over a third of classroom teachers (35%) do not hold a CDA or degree. Over half (56%) of family child care providers do not hold a CDA or degree.
- **Diversity of the Workforce:** About three-quarters of teachers and providers are non-Hispanic white; 11% are Hispanic/Latino, 8% are Black or African American, 2% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 3% are multi-racial or of another race/ethnic group – similar to the race/ethnic diversity of 3-5 year old children in Massachusetts.
- **Salary:** The early education and care workforce in centers and family child care homes earn less than their counterparts in public schools. For example, center preschool teachers, with a Bachelors degree in Early Childhood Education, earn less than half the hourly wages of public school preschool teachers.
- **Turnover:** Turnover rates – around 30% among center teachers – are more than three times the national turnover rate of 10% in education services. Turnover rates are higher among staff with lower qualifications.

### ***Higher Education Capacity to Prepare the Preschool Workforce***

- There are currently 59 IHEs offering 127 Certificate, Associate's, Bachelor's or Master's programs in Early Education and Care (ECE).
- There are regional variations in the availability and accessibility of IHEs offering programs in ECE.
  - The Metro West region of Massachusetts offers the greatest number of programs (38), followed by the Western part of the state (25), Central Massachusetts (21), the Boston area (19), the Southeast (13), and the Northeast (11).
- There are 41 Certificate and Associates programs in public colleges and universities, and 16 Certificate and Associates programs in private colleges and universities.
  - Approximately 185 graduates of Certificate programs, per year, are employed in early childhood programs after graduation.
  - Approximately 517 graduates of Associates programs, per year, are employed in early childhood programs after graduation.

---

<sup>2</sup> Source: *Massachusetts Capacity Study Research Brief: Characteristics of the Current Early Education and Care Workforce Serving 3-5 Year-olds.*

- IHE program capacity is underutilized – 86% of programs say they could serve more students with current resources. Many IHE programs report insufficient enrollments and difficulties attracting and keeping students due to poor working conditions and low wages in the field.
- Given the current capacity of Massachusetts IHEs, the current employment choices of ECE graduates, and a 2-year Associates program, it would take an estimated minimum of 7 years for Associates programs to graduate enough students to provide one teacher with an Associates degree for every 20 children currently attending early education and care programs in the Commonwealth.
- Given the current capacity of Massachusetts IHEs, the current employment choices of ECE graduates, and a 4-year Bachelors program, it would take an estimated minimum of 19 years for Bachelors programs to graduate enough students to provide one teacher for every center, Head Start and public school preschool classroom in the Commonwealth.
- Regional variations in capacity present an additional challenge. State-level figures suggest that, within 7-10 years, one teacher per preschool classroom could have an Associates degree, and within 20 years one teacher per preschool classroom could have a Bachelors degree, even with current IHE capacity. However, to meet those goals on the same timetable in all regions of the state would require increased capacity at the Associates level in Southeastern and Northeastern Massachusetts, and increased capacity at the Bachelors level in Western and Southeastern Massachusetts.
- Family child care providers are not currently required to meet the same standards of education as center-based teachers; education levels of providers reflect this fact, with only 27% of providers holding a Child Development Associate certificate<sup>3</sup>, or an Associates or Bachelors degree. Therefore, addressing the professional development of family child care providers requires a comprehensive system that integrates community-based training and IHE preparation and allows providers a longer window of time in which to meet education standards.

## HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE INFANT AND TODDLER WORKFORCE

### *Characteristics of the Current Workforce<sup>4</sup>*

- **Massachusetts Current Service Delivery System:** Infants and toddlers receive early education and care in 2,305 centers, 12 Early Head Start programs and as many as 7,369 family child care homes. Over half (54%) of infants and toddlers receiving early education and care are in EEC-licensed centers.
- **Workforce:** Estimating one lead teacher per classroom, there are 902 infant teachers in centers, 1,383 toddler teachers in centers, and 116 teachers in Early Head Start classrooms – a total of 2,401 teachers in classrooms – as well as 7,369 family child care providers.
- **Education:** In centers, 13% of infant classroom teachers and 17% of toddler classroom teachers have a Bachelors or more in the field of early care and education. In EEC-licensed family child care homes, 13% of providers have a Bachelors or more. In Early Head Start (EHS) classrooms, 7% of teachers have a Bachelors or more; of the 13 EHS family child care teachers, 6% have a Bachelors or more.

<sup>3</sup> A Child Development Associate (CDA) is a nationally recognized credential for people who provide early education and care to young children. People earn a CDA Credential from the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, a national association that supports child care providers' professional development. To earn a CDA, people must document and demonstrate their competency in supporting the healthy growth and development of children in center-based care, family child care, or home visiting programs.

<sup>4</sup> Source: *Workforce Characteristics of Infant and Toddler Caregivers in Centers, Family Child Care Homes and Early Head Start Programs: A Massachusetts Capacity Study Research Brief*

- Across all program types, an estimated 15% of infant/toddler teachers and family child care providers hold a Bachelors or graduate degree in ECE, 13% hold an Associates degree in ECE, and 3% hold a CDA; 69% of teachers and providers working with infants and toddlers do not hold a CDA, Associates or Bachelors degree.

### **Higher Education Capacity**

- Currently, 8 of the IHEs offering ECE programs include a focus on infant and toddler teacher preparation – 6 are Certificate programs offered at community colleges, one is a Bachelors program and one is a Masters program. In addition, 27 of the IHEs offering ECE programs require at least one course in the education and care of infants and toddlers and/or a practicum with infants and toddlers.
- These programs are not sufficient to prepare the current infant/toddler workforce; in fact, most infant/toddler teachers and providers have received their education through general ECE IHE programs.
- To prepare the infant/toddler workforce, as well as the preschool workforce, it would take an estimated minimum of 11 years for Associates programs to graduate enough students to provide one teacher with an Associates degree for every infant, toddler and preschool classroom, and 27 years for Bachelors programs to prepare one teacher per infant, toddler and preschool classroom.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE OUT OF SCHOOL TIME WORKFORCE**

### **Characteristics of the Current Workforce<sup>5</sup>**

- **Massachusetts Current Service Delivery System:** 58,922 children and youth are enrolled in EEC -licensed after school programs; 18,800 children/youth participated in Department of Education 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers and After-School and Out-of-School Time programs.
- **Workforce:** Estimating one group leader per 13 children and youth, there are 5,979 group leaders in the EEC and DOE sponsored programs. Most (88%) of OST staff work part-time.
- **Education:** Across all program types, an estimated 33% of group leaders hold a Bachelors or graduate degree, and 8% hold an Associates degree; 59% do not hold an Associates or Bachelors degree.
- **Diversity of the Workforce:** Three-quarters of group leaders are non-Hispanic white; 9% are Hispanic/Latino, 11% are Black or African American, 2% are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 3% are multi-racial or of another race/ethnic group – similar to the race/ethnic diversity of children and youth in Massachusetts.
- **Salary:** The OST workforce in community-based programs receives pay that is lower than that received by their counterparts in public schools. For example, the average hourly wage for a group leader in a DOE-sponsored program is \$26.60, compared to \$12.10 per hour for a group leader in a community-based school-age program.
- **Turnover:** Turnover rates around 22% are more than double the national turnover rate of 10% in education services.

<sup>5</sup> Source: *Evidence for Action: The Massachusetts Afterschool Workforce. 2005.*

### **Higher Education Capacity**

- There are currently 13 IHEs offering 24 Certificate, Associates, Bachelors or Masters programs in Out-of-School Time (OST)/ School-age programs.
- IHE programs to prepare the OST workforce are relatively new, compared to ECE programs, and this is reflected in the small number of graduates (116 in one year, and only 79 that stay in the OST field, particularly in the Associates-level programs. However, even projecting higher graduation rates as these programs reach full capacity, there are clearly not enough IHE degree-awarding programs to prepare the school-age and youth work workforce.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE EEC WORKFORCE**

- Almost all graduates of ECE Certificate and Associate's degree programs are employed in centers, public preschools or as family child care providers, and/or continue their education in the field.
- Forty-seven percent of ECE Certificate holders go on to pursue an Associate's degree in ECE, and 60% of Associate's degree graduates go on to pursue a Bachelor's degree in ECE.
- Forty-eight percent of graduates of ECE Bachelors programs that have a focus on preparation for prek-2 licensure for the public schools, and 66% of graduates of those Bachelors programs that prepare students for other ECE careers, are employed in centers, public preschools or as family child care providers.
- About half (52%) of the graduates of Bachelor's-level OST programs work in after-school programs, youth work, or in administrative, research or policy positions within the OST field. Another 30% are employed in the elementary or secondary school levels.

## **SECTION II. DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

The findings of this report have important implications for the formation of Massachusetts' comprehensive workforce development system for the EEC field. A comprehensive professional development requires several key elements, including a career ladder or lattice, access to the professional development system, core competencies, recognition and rewards, and systematic planning to integrate all elements of the system.

**Core Competencies** are the knowledge and skills needed to provide quality education and care to children (birth through school age), that reflect current research and best practices. Core competencies can provide the foundation for the alignment of coursework in ECE and OST degree programs, as well as other training and professional development opportunities for early educators. Various efforts are underway in Massachusetts to establish and implement core competencies for early care and education and out-of-school-time programs. It is essential that these efforts are realized, as the foundation of a comprehensive professional development system.

- There is strong consensus among IHE ECE programs on the importance of required courses in four core competency areas – Child Development; Relationships; Program Management and Observation and Assessment.
  - Associates-level programs (most of which are located in community colleges) are more likely to require full courses in the Child Development, Curriculum and Relationships competency areas than are Bachelors or Masters-level programs.

- Bachelors- and Masters-level programs are more likely than Associates or Certificate programs to require a full course in the Program Management competency area. These differences are consistent with the career expectations for their students, and may also reflect the involvement of community colleges in initiatives such as Advancing the Field.
- There is less agreement among ECE programs on the importance of competencies in other areas commonly recommended by ECE professionals – Curriculum; Families and Community; Cultural Competence and Professionalism.
- There is a strong consensus among IHEs that OST degree programs should require a course in the competency areas of Child and Youth Development; Curriculum; Families, Schools and Community; and Program Management, with less agreement on the recommended competency areas of Health, Safety, and Nutrition; Building Caring Relationships; Environment; Cultural Competence and Professionalism.

**Career Lattices** establish pathways with multiple points of entry and opportunities for lateral and vertical movement for individuals to progress from entry-level positions to advanced professional positions.

- This report highlights the significant variations in age, educational levels and levels of English proficiency of the current early education and care workforce.
- A career lattice would address the multiple and varied needs of the workforce, while helping individuals to progress along a defined set of core competencies associated with quality and best practices. This would also allow early educators to be recognized and better compensated for increased professional advancement.

**Articulation Agreements** facilitate the transfer of credits from community colleges to 4-year colleges and universities.

- The Massachusetts Early Childhood Transfer Compact addresses the transfer of credit from community colleges to public 4-year institutions that prepare graduates for the Early Childhood Teacher (prek-2<sup>nd</sup> grade) licensure.
  - While all public IHEs have signed the Early Childhood Compact, not all of the ECE programs in these institutions are covered by the Compact, because they are not preparing graduates for prek-2 licensure.
  - In addition, ECE programs in private institutions of higher education are not covered by the Compact.<sup>6</sup>
- Many programs report that they participate in articulation agreements, other than the Early Childhood Compact, that affect students in their program.
  - All public IHE Associates-level ECE programs, and more than half of public IHE bachelors-level ECE programs, report that they have articulation agreements with other institutions that affect students in their program.
  - Two-thirds of private IHE Associates-level ECE programs, and about half of bachelors-level OST programs and ECE programs in private IHEs, have such articulation agreements.
- Yet, most programs report that problems with the transfer of credits and articulation are at least somewhat an issue, particularly at the Associates level and in public IHEs.

---

<sup>6</sup> The Board of Higher Education is committed to expanding this Compact to non-licensure baccalaureate programs related to early childhood education.

**Access to the Higher Education System** can be a challenge for many who work with young children because many are adult learners and work full-time. Furthermore, many students speak a language other than English.

- More than half of students enrolled in programs preparing students for ECE careers other than prek-2 licensure are adult learners (60% of public IHE students and 71% of private IHE students).
- Over 60% of Certificate and Associates programs, and over half of Masters programs, report that students' competing work and/or family responsibilities are a significant challenge. Over 20% of Bachelors programs report that competing responsibilities are a significant challenge.
- About two-thirds of programs preparing students for prek-2 licensure offer evening courses, half of private IHEs OST programs and more than 80% of other programs offer evening courses. Weekend courses are more often available in public IHE programs whose students are preparing for ECE careers other than prek-2 licensure, and in public OST programs rather than private OST programs.
- The majority of ECE Certificate and Associates programs, in both public and private IHEs, report that students' lack of academic preparation or skill is a significant challenge. One third of OST Certificate and Associates programs and more than a quarter of private IHE ECE Bachelors programs, but only one in eight of the public IHE ECE Bachelors' programs, report that students' lack of academic preparation or skill is a significant challenge.
- Private IHEs have more readily provided supports for non-traditional ECE students, particularly at the Bachelor's degree level, than public IHEs.
- The current enrollments of Massachusetts IHEs reflect much of the diversity of the current ECE workforce. However, students of color are more likely to be enrolled in programs preparing them for OST or ECE careers other than prek-2 licensure.
- 20% of students speak English as a second language – programs preparing students for ECE careers other than prek-2 licensure or for OST careers, particularly in private IHEs, are more likely to enroll students who speak English as a second language than are programs preparing students for prek-2 licensure.
- Even with lower in-state tuitions at public IHEs, 80% of public IHE Certificate- and Associates-level programs, 50% of public bachelors-level programs, and 67% of public OST programs report that lack of financial support or scholarships for students is a significant challenge. By comparison, 44% of private IHE Certificate- and Associates-level programs, 21% of private bachelors-level programs, and 15% of private OST programs report that lack of financial support or scholarships for students is a significant challenge.
- Financing of IHE programs is also an issue. Approximately half of Certificate and Associates ECE Programs, as well as public IHE Masters-level ECE programs, report that the lack of full-time faculty in the program is a significant challenge.
- One-third to one-half of public IHE ECE programs at all levels report that poor faculty working conditions and wages are a significant challenge as well.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Massachusetts has set ambitious goals for itself to raise the quality of early education and care, ensuring that all children enter school ready to learn, and that children's out-of-school-time is spent in activities that support their continuing learning and growth. The early education and

care workforce is central to these efforts. Based on the results of the IHE Capacity Survey and the other research briefs of the Massachusetts Capacity Study, we endorse the following recommendations:

## **CAPACITY OF MASSACHUSETTS IHEs TO PREPARE THE EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE WORKFORCE**

### **1. Expand the Capacity of Massachusetts IHEs**

One of the charges to the Department of EEC is to develop “a statewide, high-quality, voluntary, universally accessible preschool program” – professional development is essential to this effort. To meet the goal of preparing at least one teacher per classroom of 3-to-5 year old children, we have estimated that it would take a minimum of seven years for one teacher per classroom (centers, Head Starts and public preschools) to graduate with an Associates degree in ECE, and a minimum of 19 years for one teacher per classroom to graduate with a Bachelors degree in ECE.

However, EEC has been charged with overseeing “the development and implementation of a workforce development system designed to support the education, training and compensation of the early education and care workforce, including all center, family child care, infant, toddler, preschool and school-age providers (Chapter 205 of the Acts of 2004).

Including family child care providers requires additional IHE capacity, as well as a comprehensive system that integrates community-based non-credit training programs and IHE preparation, and allows providers a longer window in which to meet standards, because family child care providers, as a group, have less education than classroom teachers. We also noted that CDAs, and credit for prior learning including CDAs, are an important part of the career lattice for family child care providers (as well as the Head Start workforce).

Finally, considering infant and toddler providers and school-age providers in the professional development system presents additional challenges – there are fewer programs that focus specifically on preparing the infant/toddler workforce or the out-of-school-time workforce, and the current capacity is not sufficient to prepare the current workforce.

We recommend that EEC work with IHEs to establish a timetable for implementation of higher workforce standards, in conjunction with the expansion of IHE capacity to prepare the early education and care workforce, consistent with the educational needs of the workforce and the resources of Massachusetts IHEs.

### **2. Expand Articulation Agreements Among Public And Private IHEs And Community Training Programs.**

A necessary component of a career lattice is articulation at all levels of training and education. The Massachusetts Early Childhood Transfer Compact is designed to facilitate the transfer of credit from community colleges to public four-year institutions that prepare graduates for the Early Childhood Teacher (prek-2<sup>nd</sup> grade) licensure in the public schools. We found that, while all public IHEs have signed the Transfer Compact, not all of the ECE programs in every institution are covered by the current Compact, which is specific to programs preparing graduates for public school licensure.

The Board of Higher Education is committed to expanding this Compact to non-licensure baccalaureate programs related to early childhood education. We encourage the Board to implement these plans.

In addition to the Early Childhood Transfer Compact, some programs have articulation agreements with other institutions offering both degree-granting and training programs. We

recommend that Massachusetts build on these efforts to create articulation agreements among public and private IHEs, as well as between community-level training programs and IHEs, and across sectors (prek-2<sup>nd</sup> licensure as well as other EEC careers; ECE as well as OST careers).

### **3. Align Program Requirements With Core Competencies.**

Core competencies - the knowledge and skills needed to provide quality early education and care - form the basis of a career lattice – when institutions of higher education and community-level training opportunities work from an agreed-upon set of core competencies, to which coursework and degree requirements are aligned, members of the workforce are able to progress through the career lattice with sequential learning opportunities that support the continuing development of knowledge and skills.

The current required coursework in both ECE and OST programs in Massachusetts IHEs reflects consensus on several core competencies. Among IHE ECE programs, there is clear consensus that required coursework should address core competencies in child development and curriculum – and strong agreement on core competencies in building caring relationships, program management and observation and assessment. Currently, only one-quarter or fewer of IHE ECE programs require courses in the core competencies of working with families and community, cultural competence, professionalism and health, safety and nutrition.

Among IHE OST programs, there is clear consensus that required coursework should address core competencies in child and youth development, program management, activities or curriculum, and working with families, schools and community – and strong agreement on core competencies in building caring relationships and health, safety, and nutrition. Currently, about one-third or fewer of IHE OST programs require courses in the core competencies of cultural competence, professionalism, and the physical environment of programs. We recommend that EEC work with IHEs and community training programs to further align course requirements to agreed-upon core competencies.

## **DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

### **4. Develop a career lattice that allows for multiple points of entry, opportunities to move within the field and across settings, programs and age groups (birth through school-age), and opportunities to progress from entry level to advanced professional levels.**

Massachusetts is committed to an early education and care delivery system that serves children from birth through school-age and in a variety of settings, including EEC-licensed early childhood centers, public school prek classrooms, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, family child care homes, DOE-supported 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers and After-School and Out-of-School Time programs and EEC-licensed after school programs. Reflecting the diverse needs of children and the diversity of settings, the current workforce consists of family child care providers, teachers, assistant teachers, paraprofessionals and aides working in classrooms, as well as program administrators, staff in Resource and Referral agencies, early intervention programs, home visitors, health and mental health services, etc. The current workforce is diverse in terms of race and ethnicity and in education and training.

A career lattice would allow Massachusetts to maintain the diversity of its service delivery system as well as the diversity of its workforce, while raising the qualifications of all sectors of the workforce.

**5. Recognize and reward professional advancement with compensation and reimbursement tied to progress along the career lattice.**

As in most other fields, salary and benefits are a significant consideration when early childhood educators are preparing for and planning their careers. Unfortunately, as several reports have shown, educators in some sectors of the field receive pay that is low compared to their counterparts in public schools and other sectors; low wages contribute to the high rates of turnover in the EEC field.

The current low-levels of compensation and related working conditions also have a direct impact on the ability of IHEs to recruit and retain students for careers in early education and care. The majority of IHE programs in early childhood education report difficulty attracting and keeping students due to poor working conditions or low wages. Appropriate reimbursement would allow Massachusetts to attract and retain qualified professionals in early education and care.

**6. Implement core competencies, birth to school-age, with age-appropriate indicators of each competency, for all roles within the early education and care field in all sectors.**

Core competencies – the knowledge and skills needed to provide quality early education and care – are essential to the development of a comprehensive system of professional development. Massachusetts has an opportunity to develop and disseminate core competencies that are based on current research on child and youth development and that reflect the experience of key stakeholders in the field, including providers, resource and referral agencies and institutions of higher education.

**7. Ensure entry to the professional development system by providing adequate funding for students (scholarships, financial aid), addressing issues related to practicum for currently-employed students, and providing adequate supports to adult learners.**

The current workforce faces specific barriers to continuing their education, which were articulated in the *Report of the Early Education and Care Advisory Committee*. We found that more than half of students currently enrolled in programs preparing them for ECE careers other than prek-2 licensure are adult learners, over the age of 22. These adult learners, who are likely to also be employed and/or have family responsibilities, and have been out of school for a few years, benefit from course schedules (evening and weekends) that reflect their circumstances, distance learning options, and academic and literacy supports.

Most programs preparing graduates for careers in ECE include a practicum as part of the requirements for graduation. Practica – supervised experience working with children in early education and care settings – provide students the opportunity to put their classroom learning into practice and to receive feedback on their competencies from their supervisor. However, for adult learners who are already employed, traditional practicum requirements may conflict with work schedules, necessitating flexible options that provide supervised experience in high quality settings while addressing the circumstances of adult learners.

For many students, given the rising costs of higher education, scholarships and financial aid are essential if they are to enter the professional development system. More than half of the public IHE programs report that lack of financial support or scholarships for their students is a problem. While students attending private IHE programs are more likely to receive financial aid than their peers in public IHE programs, one-quarter of private IHE programs still report that lack of financial aid is a problem.

- 8. Ensure the continuing diversity of the workforce. Provide greater opportunities for ethnically- and linguistically-diverse early education and care professionals, and address IHE concerns about the difficulties of recruiting and retaining ethnically- and linguistically-diverse faculty.**

The current EEC workforce is racially and ethnically diverse, reflecting the race/ethnic characteristics of the children they serve. The current enrollment in IHE programs preparing students for careers in OST or careers in early childhood, other than prek-2 licensure, are equally diverse. However, one-quarter of public IHEs report difficulty responding to the needs of non-English speakers. In addition, more than 80% of students in IHE programs preparing students for prek-2 licensure are White, raising concerns about the race/ethnic diversity of the future workforce in public school-based ECE programs.

- 9. Engage in systemic planning, coordinating changes in licensing regulations with increased capacity of IHEs and improved compensation and working conditions to recruit and maintain qualified early education and care professionals.**

A comprehensive system of professional development must simultaneously address the inter-related goals of raising the qualifications of the EEC workforce, increasing the capacity of institutions of higher education to prepare students to meet these qualifications, and improving the compensation and working conditions needed to recruit and maintain this increasingly qualified workforce.

- 10. To facilitate this systemic planning, expand the EEC Professional Child Care Qualifications Registry to document the professional development (degrees awarded, courses taken, etc.) of the workforce to allow for ongoing assessment of the professional development needs of the workforce.**

A professional development registry, which ECE and OST practitioners can access and update with their education and work history as they move through the career lattice, will facilitate systemic planning by providing information about workforce characteristics and career paths which will facilitate the planning and priority setting of policymakers and planners in EEC, higher education, resource and referral agencies and of other stakeholders.