

E4: Understanding and Supporting ECE Workforce Well-Being

Thursday, April 18, 2019

1:30 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. | Latrobe

1. Descriptive Information

E4: Understanding and Supporting ECE Workforce Well-Being

Workforce well-being is essential to providing high quality early care and education (ECE). This session brought together research on measuring

and supporting it. After sharing a brief introduction and conceptual framework, attendees were invited to view posters that present empirical studies of ECE professionals' well-being across children's ages, sectors (public pre-k, centers, homes) and levels of the ECE system (professionals who provide ECE services to children and staff who support them) at the national and state-level.

One poster examined well-being, respect and teamwork based on analyses of the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE). Another drew from the Virginia Preschool Initiative Plus evaluation to examine both stress and efficacy among center-based ECE professionals. A third examined links between provider well-being and classroom process quality. A fourth summarized a number of studies examining both psychological and physical well-being among ECE professionals. A fifth presented a mixed-methods study that examined licensed family child care providers' stress, self-efficacy and support. A sixth presented analyses from the National Study of Family Child Care Networks that included provider-level data as well as data from the agency staff who support them. A seventh examined reflective supervision as a way to increase intervention efficacy and workforce well-being.

A discussant reconvened the large group and highlighted key themes across the posters. Although measures of ECE professionals' well-being are often narrow, well-being may be better considered a broad construct that includes physical, economic and psychological wellness with important links to children's outcomes.

Facilitator

Holli Tonyan, California State University, Northridge

Poster Presenters

Kathleen Gallagher, Buffett Institute | *The Ecology of Early Childhood Workforce Well-Being: A Conceptual Framework*

Rebecca Madill, Child Trends | *Supporting Psychological Well-Being for the ECE Workforce: Findings from the NSECE*

Todd Grindal, SRI | *Teacher Wellbeing and Support in a State-wide Preschool Initiative*

Annie Partika, Georgetown University | *Associations Among Teacher Wellbeing and Pre-K Classroom Quality*

Juliet Bromer, Erikson Institute | *Examining Agency Practices that Support Family Child Care Well-Being and Engagement*

Holli Tonyan, California State University, Northridge | *Wellbeing and Support Among Family Child Care Providers in Quality Improvement Initiatives*

Amy Susman-Stillman, University of Minnesota | *The Landscape Survey: Current Training and Delivery of Reflective Supervision around the United States*

Kyong-Ah Kwon, University of Oklahoma and **Lieny Jeon**, Johns Hopkins University | *Early Childhood Teachers' Well-Being, Beliefs, Practice, Turnover, and Children's Outcomes*

Discussant

Sangeeta Parikshak, OHS/ACF

Scribe

Ryan Laychak, ICF

2. Documents Available on Website

N/A

3. Brief Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** *The Ecology of Early Childhood Workforce Well-Being: A Conceptual Framework*, Kathleen Gallagher
- The presenter gave an overview of her research on the Ecology of Early Childhood Workforce Well-Being. Her thesis revolved around the idea of “Well teachers, well children”. Her research looked into the factors contributing to professional practice and child outcomes. Some of the key points of the research included: Relationships with children, families and other professionals are the mediators for other outcomes and the centrality of the well-being of the practitioner. To do this research, the presenter looked at what they could learn from other fields. They posited that focusing solely on the individual and their capacity was not sufficient. Their research approach centered around what they could find out from other fields. For this study they looked at Psychology (occupational/health, industrial, and organizational), business, medicine and Public Health, Social Work, Sociology, Anthropology, and Economics. Some of the lesson’s learned included: wellbeing is more important than absence or illness. Context and systems are just as important as individual contributions. Leadership is key. And that this subject matter is complicated.
- The presenter also talked about using the ECE workforce well-being: a conceptual framework. They talked about how well-being is a relational phenomenon. Some of the factors they focused on included: Teachers, personal factors, knowledge and competencies, practice environments and conditions, organization and leadership, professional regulations & policy, social and cultural factors. To do this they went out in the field looking at wages & well-being, used existing staff surveys, leadership interviews, and surveys on staff well-being.

The remainder of the session, attendees viewed the 7 posters around the room and engaged individually with poster presenters.

- [Bromer Examining Agency Practices](#)
- [Gallagher The Ecology of Early Childhood Workforce](#)
- [Gallagher Understanding & Supporting ECE Workforce](#)
- [Grindal Teacher Well-Being/Classroom Composition/Coaching](#)
- [Johnson ECE Teacher Stressors and Supports](#)
- [Kwon EC Teachers’ Psychological Well-Being](#)
- [Madill Understanding and Supporting ECE Workforce](#)
- [Susman-Stillman Reflective Practice Center](#)
- [Susman-Stillman Studying and Supporting ECE Workforce](#)
- [Susman-Stillman The Landscape Survey](#)
- [Tonyan Wellbeing and Support](#)

4. Brief Summary of Discussion:

After a 30-minute poster session, the discussant returned to discuss Head Start in a broader context.

The discussant started by leading a discussion around staff wellness research and its impact on Head Start. The Whitaker (2012) study found that almost 30% of Head Start staff reported feeling physically or mentally unhealthy more than two weeks in the previous month and almost 10% reported missing two or more weeks of work in the previous year due to illness. The discussant explained how Head Start’s focus on staff wellness is around the context that “wellness is much more than the absence of illness”. Head Start is working to create a culture of wellness for young children and the adults who care for them through education on the signs and symptoms of stress, tips to manage stress, and self-reflection questions about stress level and management of stress. She discussed the idea that no one can do this work in isolation. A key component to children’s academic achievement and long-term success is relationships with consistent caregivers and supportive adults. She elaborated that they need the support of peers and need to feel that they are a part of a team. The discussion then moved to the need for providers to help

themselves before they help others. Finally, discussion supported the idea that staff well-being is about self-efficacy and sense of control, having the right supports in place, and about adult mental health.

The discussant then opened up for group discussion around the question: What factors contribute to workforce well-being? Attendees stressed that it is important to think about all the different roles across the workforce system (teachers, providers, assistants, directors, coaches) and that factors shaping well-being may vary across roles. Attendees stressed the need to consider the lived realities of adults who are caring for children. Are there a set of common factors around well-being that are specific to staff who work directly with young children regardless of setting? The group discussed the idea that this is a physically demanding job in a world that often doesn't view it as challenging. Several examples were shared of teachers feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and without support in their role caring for children who may exhibit physically challenging behaviors. The idea of rethinking challenging child behavior as behaviors that challenge teachers/providers may help the field begin to think more deeply about the well-being of the adults who comprise the ECE workforce.

5. Summary of Key Issues Raised

- Head Start's focus on staff wellness is around the context that "wellness is much more than the absence of illness"
- Important to study other fields and see if we can pull key findings to support well-being of ECE staff
- Consideration of real experiences of adults who care for children in ECE settings may lead to greater recognition of the need for workforce supports around well-being.
- *Emerging findings that may be of particular interest to policy-makers and ACF?*
- *Methodological issues including innovative methodologies that may help maximize resources available for research and evaluation?*
- *Follow-up activities suggested addressing questions and gaps (e.g., secondary analyses of data, consensus meetings of experts, research synthesis or brief, webinar, etc.)?*
- *Recommendations about future ACF child care research directions and priorities?*