

2012 CCPRC Annual Meeting
Workshop Session A-3
October 24, 2012, 10:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

Strengthening the Workforce through Professional Development and Quality Improvement Systems

Description

The goal of this session was to discuss research about the effectiveness of strategies to improve the early childhood and school-age workforce. Presenters discussed three approaches: a statewide initiative in Oregon, a coaching initiative to support effective teaching in Head Start, and efforts to understand professional development patterns of the workforce in Massachusetts. A discussant from the Professional Development Systems and Workforce Initiatives Center (PDW Center) reflected on how these strategies contribute to an integrated professional development system.

Facilitator

Sarah LeMoine, PDW Center

Presenters

Eboni Howard, American Institutes for Research
Anne Douglass, University of Massachusetts-Boston
Shannon Lipscomb, Oregon State University-Cascades

Scribe

Sarah Friese, Child Trends

1. Documents in Session Folder

- “The Process Evaluation of Head Start’s Early Learning Mentor Coach Initiative (ELMC): Informing Research and Practice;” Eboni Howard
- “Characteristics and Professional Development Experiences of Early Educators in Massachusetts;” Anne Douglass, Alice Carter and Frank Smith
- “Professional Development Outcomes from Oregon’s Education Quality Investment Partnership (EQUIP);” Shannon Lipscomb

2. Brief Summary of Presentations

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** Eboni Howard
Eboni provided an overview of an 18-month process evaluation of Head Start’s Early Learning Mentor Coach (ELMC) initiative.
 - Mentor coaching is used in Head Start, child care, pre-k and QRIS and is a partnership between a staff member/consultant and a less experienced staff member. The focus of the relationship varies, but can include building staff capacity, providing positive relationships between staff, refining skills, developing new skills, implementing new curricula, etc. The research on coaching and mentoring is limited and the definition of coaching is variable and changes over time. It can be a core

- component of professional development (PD), an add-on to PD, or a mechanism to provide information.
- ELMC was funded to improve teaching practices in Early Head Start and Head Start. 130 grantees of various sizes across the country were funded for the period of September 2010 to February 2012. Some were operating in partnership with child care and State preK. Grantees determined their mentor coaching goals, approach and focus.
 - The goals of the evaluation were to describe the implementation of the ELMC, the factors that appear to be related to successful mentor-coaching, and develop a Coach Conceptual Model. The design was mixed methods and descriptive analysis. There was an online survey of all of the mentor coaches and a phone interview with a sample of mentor-coaches.
 - The dimensions of coaching were type of coach, structure of the coaching relationships, coaching procedures, and dimensions of quality.
 - Preliminary findings include that 45% of grantees had mentor-coaching before the implementation of ELMC; 37% did not have any full-time mentor-coaches. 98% of grantees reported that interpersonal skills were important in the hiring of coaches. 89% said that experience training, teaching or mentoring/coaching adults was important in hiring. 68% said that language or a cultural match were important for hiring.
 - Grantee goals most commonly focused on quality issues such as quality of staff practice, CLASS assessment scores, child outcomes, and teacher training on school readiness.
 - Most of the coaches (87%) had a Bachelor's degree and 74% were white. 64% served 2 to 9 centers. The common roles they played were as collaborative partner, emotional supporter, teacher/instructor and problem-solver.
 - Next steps include finalizing the research, releasing the report in 2013, developing a conceptual logic model, and developing the evidence for best practices in coaching.
 - Questions: was early literacy improvement a primary goal? The focus was more global, e.g., improving CLASS scores. Who received mentoring? Mostly teachers and assistant teachers. Were you able to document overall change? Study started late in the 18-month grant period, so while they were able to document perceived success at point in time, they couldn't measure changes overall.
- **Summary of Presentation #2: Anne Douglass**
 Anne's presentation was an overview of a study of the characteristics and PD patterns of early educators in Massachusetts where there has been an effort to align PD with QRIS. Professional development is seen as a driver of change.
 - The study also examined two policy changes: 1) encouraging providers to take courses (training) together which is based on research that shows that when people attend PD with those they work with, they're more likely to translate what they've learned into practice in the classroom; and, 2) prioritizing access to PD for providers working with high-needs children.
 - Research questions include, what are the characteristics of educators enrolled in the Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR)? What are the characteristics of educators who participated in PD? To what extent do educators who work together participate

- in the same PD coursework? What type of density is reflected in participation? Do we see increased density with the requirement to send multiple staff to a PD course?
- Data sources included information from the registry, program priority rating list, PD attendance records for educators, and the PD course catalog.
 - Course content was most often growth and development, learning environments and implementing curriculum, understanding growth and development, and guiding and interacting with children and youth.
 - Density of participation was uncommon: 74% of the time, when an educator from a program attended a course, no one else from his or her workplace attended. When there was a requirement to participate as a team in a PD course, 55% of the time, educators went alone.
 - These findings can be used to inform data systems, policy and professional development research.
 - Questions: Is there a level where critical mass is reached in terms of teacher participation in a course? What's the tipping point? Is there a difference with staff who are younger versus older in the workforce? Data quality issues around attendance? Because PQR data about training participation is poor (self-entry), study used data from the PD system. This has implications to the State data system.
- **Summary of Presentation #3: Shannon Lipscomb**
Shannon's presentation provided an overview of Oregon's Education Quality Investment Partnership (EQUIP) outcomes related to professional development.
 - EQUIP is a Statewide public-private partnerships with the goal of strengthening the workforce and programs to prepare children for school. It includes provider, facility and system-level strategies
 - EQUIP's provider level strategies include scholarships to pursue degree and community-based training; education awards; and, the Oregon Registry Campaign. The facility-level strategies are the Quality Indicator Program and the Oregon Program of Quality. The systems level strategies include integrating effort to measure and improve quality and an integrated data system that links facility data with provider data.
 - Research questions include: how well did EQUIP engage members of the workforce and what are their characteristics, did it help providers increase professionalism, and to what extent did providers show increases in training/skill building and knowledge/skills? Data used included administrative data and a participant survey.
 - Results found that participation in the registry went up dramatically. Both provider-level and facility-level strategies were rated as helping providers feel more professional (particularly providers from under-represented groups). Education awards, the Oregon Registry and the Quality Indicator Program were rated as particularly effective.
 - Conclusions and implications: research is needed on the links between provider PD and facility quality (staff qualifications are challenging for facilities to improve and providers reported that facility-level strategies helped them as individuals).
 - Questions: Were there specific incentives for providers to participate? No, but Oregon has done a really good job of trying to make both the registry and training accessible in multiple languages (and to have trainers with different kinds of backgrounds).

What are the elements that go into the development of a career—what does an outstanding professional need to have so we can duplicate this with new people. Oregon is trying to look at individuals with facilities (despite turnover issues).

3. Brief Summary of Discussion

The three presentations in this session described three projects examining different facets of professional development for early childhood educators. The topics covered included coaching and the characteristics of the professional development workforce within the framework of two States' PD framework.

- Results presented reflected the policy environment in States while examining the impact of policy decisions on educator PD.
- Issues that arose during the final discussion included the fact that policymakers want to know what the best investments are in terms of PD and coaching; we're not there yet and need to figure out next steps so that evidence-based investment can be made.
- Questions were raised about dosage (need to consider definitions, context and individuals); how scholarship dollars should be targeted and effectiveness measured; and regional characteristics and needs (need to improve data systems so that information is available in a timely, ongoing and sustainable way).

4. Summary of Key Issues Raised

- Research needs to inform the design of data collection and management systems.
- Questions raised by these studies include: density (encouraging multiple educators from a program to attend the same training/course); role these efforts can play in increasing professionalism and training for providers from under-represented groups; targeting of scholarship funds; and the intersection between facility-level and provider-level interventions to improve quality.
- The need to think intentionally about how research and data can be used to help policy-makers in determining policy and cost-effective investments.