

A Closer Look: Child Care, PreK and Head Start Collaboration
Diane Schilder, EdD and Louisa Anastasopoulos, MA
<i>September 30, 2010 to February, 2012</i>

Project Description.

CCDF, Pre-K and Head Start all serve low-income children under the age of 5, but each of these programs is guided by different goals, standards, delivery models, and operational hours, resulting in unique strengths as well as differences in quality. Research has shown that child care providers in collaboration with Head Start demonstrate benefits over comparison providers in terms of program quality, teacher quality, and classroom quality. However, questions remain about the nature and impact of multi-program collaborations on desired outcomes. Our study is designed to address questions about the nature and impact of child care, pre-K, and Head Start collaboration.

Research Questions.

We are analyzing state, provider-and child-level data provided by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), the Ohio Department of Job & Family Services (ODJFS), and existing survey datasets from Education Development Center, Inc (EDC) to address the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of programs that are engaged in collaboration?
2. What are the characteristics of teachers who work in programs engaged in collaboration?
3. What are the characteristics of the children who are enrolled in programs engaged in collaboration?
4. Is there a relationship between collaboration and classroom quality?
5. Is there a relationship between collaboration and teacher professional development?
6. Is there a relationship between collaboration and child growth?

Sample. We are completing secondary analyses of three different databases: 1) Ohio administrative data; 2) the Child Care Quality database; and 3) Ohio policy documents. The Ohio administrative database has a sample of 168 providers, 168 classrooms (one classroom per provider) and an average of 15 children

per classroom. However, fewer than half of the records could be linked. The Child Care Quality database represents a sample of survey data from 141 child care programs and observations of 61 classrooms. The Ohio policy documents include state laws, regulations, policy communication, and guidance to counties, districts and programs.

Methods. The study used a mixed methods approach including quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

Analytic procedures.

We are conducting three sets of analyses to answer our research questions. First, we conducted descriptive statistical analyses to analyze differences among programs, classrooms and children based on the type and intensity of program-level collaboration. Second, we are in the process of conducting quantitative analyses using HLM (as embodied in the HLM6 software program). HLM will allow us to take into account the interdependencies among levels and permit the variance in outcomes to be decomposed into multiple sources (e.g., child, classroom, and provider characteristics) (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Collins & Sayer, 2000).

Third, we are conducting an exploratory qualitative analysis utilizing the case study method to address how the state is supporting local-level collaborations to enhance quality of services, while also supporting parents' workforce participation.

Progress Update. We are in the process of completing all cleaning, coding and preliminary analysis of datasets. Specific issues or findings that we will be able to address in November 2011 at the CCPRC Annual Meeting include program characteristics associated with different types of collaboration, teacher professional development and education differences based on types of collaboration. Analyses completed to date reveals differences in child care providers engaged in multi-partner collaborations compared with those engaged in single-partner collaboration or no collaboration. Differences exist in program characteristics (such as non-profit status), hours of operation, benefits to teachers,

services to children and services to families. For example, the number of collaborating and type of collaborating partners is associated with number and type of screenings, referrals and services offered to children and parents.

Implications for policy/practice

Knowledge about the nature and type of collaboration associated with desired outcomes can inform the revision and/or development of child care policies and practices aimed at increasing access to and improving quality of child care for children and families.

Implications for research

In this study, we have analyzed data from a number of different databases including data from the state child care agency, the state department of education, the state resource & referral association, and survey data.

We encountered challenges in linking data from different state sources, developing variables that account for differing intensity and types of partnership, and developing analysis plans that account for the dynamics of collaboration but we used a number of strategies that helped us be successful. In addition, we are using a mix methods analytic strategy that will allow us to both quantify and provide rich documentation of families' views. These will constitute a contribution to the research field.

Contact: Diane Schilder, Ed.D.
Senior Research Scientist
Education Development Center, Inc.
Phone: 617-816-2026
Email: dschilder@edc.org