

National Professional Development Center on Inclusion

Helping states achieve an integrated professional development system that supports high quality inclusion



Results from The Virginia Landscape

Background

The purpose of this survey conducted in fall 2009 was to gather information across multiple sectors to produce a descriptive landscape of early childhood professional development (PD) in Virginia. A total of 267 early childhood PD providers completed the survey (see method section for additional details). These PD providers answered questions about the characteristics of the learners (the *who*), the content of the PD (the *what*), and the methods used to promote the acquisition and application of knowledge and skills in practice (the *how*).

Who

are the learners who participate in professional development activities?

- The vast majority of learners were reported to be practitioners (91%); other learners (e.g., administrators, family members, specialists) who participated in PD were reported by about one-half or fewer of the PD providers.^a
- Of the practitioners, about one-third had a 2-year, 4-year, or graduate degree; almost half had an early childhood and/or early intervention license or credential (42%). Practitioners were divided almost equally between those who served infants and toddlers and/or those who served Pre-K children; the majority served children and families who were diverse with respect to a variety of factors (e.g., income, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, ability level). The majority of practitioners worked in center-based programs (e.g., child care, Head Start, preschool) as opposed to home-based or early intervention programs.

Practitioners' Level of Education

Graduate degree	10%
4-year degree	19%
2-year degree	9%
Some college	28%
High School	24%
Don't know	10%

Groups of Children and Families Practitioners Served^a

Low income	89%
Diverse	87%
English Language Learners	71%
Identified disabilities/delays	63%
At risk for learning difficulties or challenging behaviors	63%
Don't know	4%

Age Groups Practitioners Served^a

Infants/toddlers	81%
Pre-K	85%
K-3rd grade or higher	40%

Practitioners' Work Settings^a

Child care centers and homes	80%
Head Start or Early Head Start	66%
Private preschools	56%
Public Pre-K programs	47%
K and/or primary grades	30%
Home visiting/family support	28%
Early intervention	25%
Public Pre-K for children with disabilities	24%
Other	4%

What

is the content of the professional development?

- Approximately three-fourths or more of PD content focused on general classroom practices, development and learning, and working with families; whereas one-half or less of the PD activities focused on practices to address diverse learning needs (e.g., strategies for working with children with identified disabilities, and children from diverse cultural and linguistic groups).
- More PD providers drew on their state’s early learning guidelines/standards and professional competencies than on any single national framework to guide their PD activities; about one-third or less relied on NAEYC’s accreditation criteria, the Head Start Child Outcomes framework, and/or the DEC Recommended Practices.

Content Areas Covered in PD^a

Children’s development and learning	89%
Strategies for improving general classroom practices, learning environments, and program quality to support development and learning for all children	75%
Strategies for collaborating, communicating with, and/or supporting families	74%
Children’s health, safety, and nutrition	64%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children with identified disabilities	50%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children at risk for learning disabilities or with challenging behaviors	50%
Strategies for collaborating and communicating with other professionals	48%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children from diverse cultural and linguistic groups	44%
Assessment approaches	43%
Other	14%

Professional and program standards/competencies on which PD was based^a

Your state’s early learning guidelines/standards	62%
Your state’s professional competencies or core body of knowledge for early childhood	55%
NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs	53%
Your state’s Quality Rating System (QRS) or Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)	46%
NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria	36%
Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and Head Start Program Performance Standards	31%
NAEYC Codes of Ethical Conduct	29%
Professional competencies/standards endorsed by a national professional organization	29%
Preparing Early Childhood Professionals: NAEYC’s Standards for Programs	24%
DEC Recommended Practices	18%
Office of Special Education Programs outcomes for children with disabilities	17%
Other	18%

How

are professional development activities delivered?

- Almost all PD activities were organized as courses, workshops, or institutes. Close to half incorporated models of collaboration (e.g., consultation, technical assistance, coaching, mentoring). Other approaches—such as co-teaching, communities of practice, and distance learning—were used by fewer than one-fourth of the PD providers.
- PD activities involved a variety of teaching strategies, with print materials, large and small group activities and/or discussions, lectures, and video demonstrations mentioned by about three-fourths or more of respondents.
- About two-thirds of the PD delivered consisted of one-time events on a particular topic, including some follow-up activities; whereas less than one-fourth of the PD activities on a particular topic provided ongoing instruction or long-term PD support.
- Less than one-fourth of PD activities offered college or university credits (20%).

Primary Approaches Used in PD^a

Courses, workshops, or institutes	94%
Consultation	53%
Technical assistance	50%
Coaching	44%
Mentoring	44%
Co-teaching	22%
Communities of practice/practitioner study groups	22%
Distance learning approaches	22%
Other	5%

Level of Intensity of PD on a Particular Topic

1-time PD event	36%
1-time PD event with some follow-up activities	32%
Full semester course and/or long-term PD support	21%
Other	11%

Teaching Strategies Used in PD^a

Print materials	92%
Large and small group discussions	90%
Large and small group activities	86%
Lectures	73%
Video demonstrations	70%
Role play	56%
Case method of instructions	52%
Web resources, or online literature searches	50%
Individual or group assignments	46%
Networking opportunities	43%
Guidance and feedback on instructional or intervention practices	41%
Field assignments, homework, back-home or action plans	35%
Structured opportunities to interact with and learn from families of young children	23%
Other	13%

Key Contexts and Supports

About half of the survey respondents said (a) the PD they provided was coordinated across multiple agencies, institutions, or disciplines; (b) they were aware of specific local, state, or federal policies and initiatives that influenced how they approached PD; (c) there were incentives available to encourage participation in the PD they provided; and (d) they were aware of organizational or agency resources that could be used to support the PD they provided. A majority of respondents publicized (68%) and evaluated (86%) the PD they provided.

Method

The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion conducted the 37-item Web-based *Landscape* survey using Qualtrics software. A state team identified 836 potential PD providers in Virginia and these providers were invited via email to complete the Landscape online survey. Of the 375 individuals who followed the link in the invitation email to the Web site with details about the survey, 267 completed the survey^b (representing 71% of those who visited the Web site; 32% of the total number invited). See below for characteristics of survey respondents.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Sex

Female	96%
--------	-----

Age

Mean	49
SD	10
Range	23–70

Race

White	79%
Black/African American	13%
Other ^c	8%

Ethnicity

Not Hispanic or Latino	96%
Hispanic or Latino	4%

Highest Level of Education^d

Graduate degree	62%
Bachelor's degree	28%
Associate's degree	4%
Some college	4%
High school	1%

Years in Early Childhood

Mean	20
SD	11
Range	1–50

Years Providing Early Childhood PD

Mean	12
SD	9
Range	0–37

Frequency of PD Provision Annually

3–5 times or more per month	44%
1–2 times per month	33%
Less than once per month	23%

Organizational Affiliation^a

State agency	24%
University, college, or community college	24%
Private agency	17%
Local or regional agency	17%
Child Care Resource and Referral	11%
Head Start, Early Head Start	11%
Parent/Family Support	5%
Early Intervention	3%
Military	<1%
Other	24%

Provided PD as Part of a State or Regional PD Network or System

No	54%
Yes	46%

Held a State Credential as a PD Provider

No	79%
Yes	21%

Additional information about the Landscape survey may be found at <http://npdci.fpg.unc.edu/resources/planning-and-facilitation-tools>

This report was prepared by Virginia Buysse and Heidi Hollingsworth with support from the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion. For additional information, contact Heidi Hollingsworth at hholling@email.unc.edu

^a For most questions, respondents could check all that apply so percentages will not add up to 100.

^b Some respondents did not complete all items.

^c American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Multiracial, and Other.

^d Respondents reported a wide range of different disciplines within education, health care, allied health, social work, and psychology as their primary disciplines, with no one discipline being reported for the majority of respondents.