

National Professional Development Center on Inclusion

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



Results from The Iowa Landscape: Fall 2011

Background

The purpose of this survey conducted in fall 2011 was to gather information across multiple sectors to produce a descriptive landscape of early childhood professional development (PD) in Iowa. A total of 343 early childhood PD providers responded to 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 were the learners who participated in professional development activities?

- The vast majority of learners in PD were reported to be practitioners (93%); other learners were reported to participate in PD by fewer than one-half of the PD providers. (These included administrators [48%], family members [24%], PD providers [22%], specialists [13%], and other [8%].)^a
- Of the practitioners, about one-third had a 2-year, 4-year, or graduate degree (34%) and an early childhood and/or early intervention license, credential, or endorsement (33%). The majority of practitioners served pre-K children and infants and toddlers, whereas fewer than one-third served children in kindergarten and higher. Most practitioners served children and families who were diverse with respect to a variety of factors (e.g., income, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, ability level), and the majority worked in center-based programs (e.g., child care, Head Start, pre-school), as opposed to home-based or early intervention programs.

Information Specifically about Learners Identified as Practitioners

Practitioners' Level of Education

Graduate degree	5%
4-year degree	23%
2-year degree	6%
Some college	25%
High School	27%
Don't know	14%

Practitioners' Work Settings^a

Child care centers and homes	83%
Head Start or Early Head Start	67%
Private preschools	64%
Public Pre-K programs	60%
Public Pre-K for children with disabilities (Part B)	31%
Home visiting/family support	28%
Early intervention (Part C)	19%
K and/or primary grades	16%
Other	2%

Age Groups

Practitioners Served^a

Infants/toddlers	80%
Pre-K	91%
K–3rd grade or higher	32%

Groups of Children and Families

Practitioners Served^a

Low income	94%
Diverse race, ethnicity, culture	77%
At risk for learning difficulties or challenging behaviors	72%
Identified disabilities/delays	70%
English Language Learners	68%
Children with special health care needs	53%
Don't know	6%

WHAT was the content of the professional development?

- Approximately three-fourths or more of PD content focused on knowledge about children’s development and learning, general classroom practices, and working with families, whereas approximately 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).
- One-half or more of PD providers drew on their state’s early learning guidelines/standards, their state’s professional competencies, their state’s quality rating and improvement system, and the NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice to guide their PD activities; less than one-third relied on the Head Start Child Outcomes framework or the DEC Recommended Practices.

Content Areas Covered in PD^a

Knowledge about children’s development and learning	81%
Strategies for improving general classroom practices, learning environments, and program quality to support development and learning for all children	74%
Strategies for collaborating, communicating with, and/or supporting families	73%
Knowledge about children’s health, safety, and nutrition	70%
Strategies for collaborating and communicating with other professionals	52%
Assessment approaches	49%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children at risk for learning disabilities or with challenging behaviors	48%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children with identified disabilities	45%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children from diverse cultural and linguistic groups	39%
Other	9%

Professional and Program Standards/Competencies on Which PD Was Based^a

Your state’s early learning guidelines/standards	69%
NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs	64%
Your state’s Quality Rating System (QRS) or Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)	61%
Your state’s professional competencies or core body of knowledge for early childhood	50%
NAEYC personnel standards	30%
Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and Head Start Program Performance Standards	23%
DEC Recommended Practices	10%
Office of Special Education Programs outcomes for children with disabilities	10%
DEC personnel standards	2%
Other	20%

HOW were professional development activities delivered?

- Almost all PD activities were organized as courses, workshops, or institutes. One-third to approximately one-half incorporated models of collaboration (e.g., consultation, coaching, mentoring) and technical assistance. Fewer PD providers used other approaches, such as distance learning, co-teaching, and communities of practice.
- PD activities involved a variety of teaching strategies, with large and small group activities and/or discussions, print materials, lectures, and video demonstrations mentioned by three-fourths or more of respondents.
- Close to half of the PD delivered consisted of one-time events on a particular topic with or without some follow-up activities; whereas very few PD activities on a particular topic provided ongoing instruction or long-term PD support. The majority of PD providers offered follow-up support/technical assistance (TA) via email (84%), onsite/in person (77%), or by phone (73%); whereas fewer offered follow-up support/TA via regular mail (24%).^a
- Most PD activities offered state approved/required training credits (54%); some offered certificates of participation (20%) or continuing education credits (11%); very few offered college or university credits (8%).

Primary Approaches Used in PD^a

Courses, workshops, or institutes	93%
Consultation	52%
Technical assistance	51%
Coaching	43%
Mentoring	33%
Distance learning approaches	18%
Co-teaching	15%
Communities of practice/ practitioner study groups	11%
Other	2%

Level of Intensity of PD on a Particular Topic

1-time PD event with or without some follow-up activities	45%
Multiple PD sessions, but less than a full semester course	35%
Full semester course and/or long-term PD support	14%
Other	5%

Teaching Strategies Used in PD^a

Large and small group discussions	94%
Print materials	94%
Large and small group activities	89%
Lectures	81%
Video demonstrations	75%
Individual or group assignments	55%
Role play	52%
Case method of instruction	51%
Web resources, or online literature searches	48%
Field assignments, homework, back-home or action plans	47%
Networking opportunities	47%
Guidance and feedback on instruc- tional or intervention practices	45%
Structured opportunities to interact with and learn from families of young children	17%
Other	3%

Key contexts and supports for professional development

A majority of respondents said: (a) they were aware of specific local, state, or federal policies and initiatives that influenced how they approached PD (58%); (b) they were aware of organizational or agency resources that could be used to support the PD they provided (64%); (c) they publicized their PD activities (70%); and (d) they evaluated their PD activities (86%). Just over one-half of the survey respondents said the PD they provided was coordinated across multiple agencies, institutions, or disciplines (56%); and there were incentives available to encourage participation in the PD they provided (54%).

Method

The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion conducted the 33-item Web-based *Landscape* survey using Qualtrics software. A state team identified potential PD providers in Iowa and these providers were invited via email to complete the *Landscape* online survey (678 emails were successfully sent). Of the 388 individuals who followed the link in the invitation email to the Web site with details about the survey, 343 responded to the survey^b (88% of those who visited the Web site; 51% of the total number invited). See below for characteristics of survey respondents.

Characteristics of survey respondents

Sex

Female	98%
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Age

Mean	47
SD	10
Range	20–70

Ethnicity

Not Hispanic or Latino	99%
Hispanic or Latino	1%

Race

White	98%
Black/African American	1%
Other ^c	1%

Highest Level of Education

Graduate degree	40%
Bachelor's degree	46%
Associate's degree	10%
Some college	4%
High School	<1%

Discipline

Early Childhood Education/ Early Intervention	42%
Health	15%
Education/Special Education	14%
Psychology	6%
Social Work	5%
Allied Health	1%
Other	17%

Years in Early Childhood

Mean	18
SD	11
Range	0–50

Years Providing Early Childhood PD

Mean	10
SD	8
Range	0–45

Frequency of PD Provision Annually

Less than once per month	48%
1-2 times per month	29%
3-5 times or more per month	10%
More than 5 times per month	14%

Primary Employer

Local or regional agency	27%
Child Care Resource & Referral	17%
University, college, or community college	16%
Self-employed independent contractor	9%
State agency	7%
Federal agency	7%
Professional organization	3%
Other	15%

Held a State Credential as a PD Provider

Yes	33%
No	67%

Regions(s) in which Typically Provided PD^a

Counties served by:	
AEA 1 [Keystone AEA]	17%
AEA 267	24%
AEA 8 [Prairie Lakes AEA]	15%
AEA 9 [Mississippi Bend AEA]	16%
AEA 10 [Grant Wood AEA]	18%
AEA 11 [Heartland AEA]	30%
AEAs 4 & 12 [Northwest AEA]	13%
AEAs 13 & 14 [Green Hills AEA]	18%
AEAs 15 & 16 [Great Prairie AEA]	16%

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

This report was prepared in November 2011 by Heidi Hollingsworth at Elon University, and Virginia Buysse and Tracy West at the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion. For additional information, contact npdci@unc.edu

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

^b Some respondents did not complete all items.

^c Multiracial, and Some other race.