Results from

The Minnesota Landscape: Spring 2011

Background

The purpose of this survey conducted in spring 2011 was to gather information across multiple sectors to produce a descriptive landscape of early childhood professional development (PD) in Minnesota. A total of 217 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 [46%], family members [35%], PD providers [27%], specialists [20%], and other [10%].)[a]
- Of the practitioners, almost half had a 2-year, 4-year, or graduate degree (42%); and almost half had an early childhood and/or early intervention license or credential (42%). The majority of practitioners served pre-K children and infants and toddlers, whereas fewer than half 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, preschool), as opposed to home-based or early intervention programs.

Information Specifically about Learners Identified as Practitioners

Practitioners' Level of Education

Graduate degree	4%
4-year degree	27%
2-year degree	11%
Some college	26%
High School	10%
Don't know	21%

Practitioners' Work Settings[a]

Child care centers and homes	90%
Head Start or Early Head Start	61%
Private preschools	52%
Public Pre-K programs	46%
Preschool for children with disabilities (Part B)	32%
Early intervention (Part C)	31%
Home visiting/family support	31%
K and/or primary grades	18%
Other	10%

Age Groups Practitioners Served[a]

Infants/toddlers	88%
Pre-K	98%
K-3rd grade or higher	48%

Groups of Children and Families Practitioners Served[a]

Low income	88%
Diverse race, ethnicity, culture	81%
At risk for learning difficulties or challenging behaviors	75%
Identified disabilities/delays	74%
English Language Learners	70%
Children with special health care needs	51%
Don't know	8%

WHAT was the content of the professional development?

- Four-fifths 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).
- More PD providers drew on their state's professional competencies, early learning guidelines/standards, and the NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice than on their state's quality rating and improvement system 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	87%
Strategies for improving general classroom practices, learning environments, and program quality to support development and learning for all children	83%
Strategies for collaborating, communicating with, and/or supporting families	80%
Knowledge about children's health, safety, and nutrition	54%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children at risk for learning disabilities or with challenging behaviors	54%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children with identified disabilities	50%
Strategies for collaborating and communicating with other professionals	50%
Strategies for improving inclusion, participation, and learning for children from diverse cultural and linguistic groups	46%
Assessment approaches	41%
Other	12%

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

Your state's professional competencies or core body of knowledge for early childhood	73%
Your state's early learning guidelines/standards	71%
NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs	67%
Your state's Quality Rating System (QRS) or Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS)	40%
NAEYC personnel standards	28%
Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and Head Start Program Performance Standards	24%
DEC Recommended Practices	13%
Office of Special Education Programs outcomes for children with disabilities	12%
DEC personnel standards	3%
Other	15%

HOW were 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, mentoring, coaching). Other approaches—such as distance learning, communities of practice, and co-teaching—were used by approximately one-third or less of the PD providers.
- PD activities involved a variety of teaching strategies, with large and small group activities and/or discussions, print materials, and lectures mentioned by more than three-fourths of respondents.
- More than one-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 (88%), onsite/in person (62%), or by phone (61%); whereas fewer offered follow-up support/TA via regular mail (16%).
- Most PD activities offered state approved/required training credits (36%) or certificates of participation (35%); very few offered college or university credits (4%).

Primary Approaches Used in PD[a]

Courses, workshops, or institutes	92%
Consultation	53%
Mentoring	44%
Coaching	42%
Technical assistance	36%
Distance learning approaches	26%
Communities of practice/ practitioner study groups	25%
Co-teaching	23%
Other	3%

Level of Intensity of PD on a Particular Topic

1-time PD event with or without some follow-up activities	60%
Multiple PD sessions, but less than a full semester course	26%
Full semester course and/or long-term PD support	8%
Other	6%

Teaching Strategies Used in PD[a]

Large and small group discussions	97%
Large and small group activities	91%
Print materials	91%
Lectures	82%
Video demonstrations	67%
Case method of instruction	63%
Web resources, or online literature searches	52%
Individual or group assignments	51%
Role play	47%
Guidance and feedback on instructional or intervention practices	46%
Field assignments, homework, back-home or action plans	42%
Networking opportunities	39%
Structured opportunities to interact with and learn from families of young children	22%
Other	5%

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 (65%); (b) they were aware of organizational or agency resources that could be used to support the PD they provided (63%); (c) they publicized their PD activities (62%); and (d) they evaluated their PD activities (88%). 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 (51%).

Method

The National Professional Development Center on Inclusion conducted the 34-item Web-based *Landscape* survey using Qualtrics software. A state team identified potential PD providers in Minnesota and these providers were invited via email to complete the *Landscape* online survey (550 emails were successfully sent). Of the 280 individuals who followed the link in the invitation email to the Web site with details about the survey, 217 responded to the survey[b] (77% of those who visited the Web site; 39% of the total number invited). See below for characteristics of survey respondents.

Characteristics of survey respondents

Sex

Female	96%

Age

Mean	49
SD	11
Range	24–70

Ethnicity

Not Hispanic or Latino	98%
Hispanic or Latino	2%

Race

White	89%
Black/African American	4%
Other[c]	8%

Highest Level of Education

Graduate degree	45%
Bachelor's degree	40%
Associate's degree	4%
Some college	10%
High school	1%

Discipline

Early Childhood Education/ Early Intervention	48%
Education/ Special Education	23%
Social Work	6%
Psychology	5%
Health	3%
Other	15%

Years in Early Childhood

Mean	22
SD	11
Range	1–50

Years Providing Early Childhood PD

Mean	12
SD	8
Range	0–40

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 April 2011 by Heidi Hollingsworth and Virginia Buysse with support from the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion. For additional information, contact npdci@unc.edu

Frequency of PD Provision Annually

3–5 times or more per month	38%
1–2 times per month	32%
Less than once per month	30%

Primary Employer

Local or regional agency	32%
Self-employed independent contractor	26%
University, college, or community college	9%
Federal agency	6%
State agency	4%
Other	22%

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

Yes	76%
No	24%

Primary Network/System

Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR&R)	65%
Head Start	6%
Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)	3%
Center for Inclusive Child Care (CICC)	3%
Regional Low Incidence Projects (RLIPs)	3%
Meantal Health Consultants	3%
Other	15%

Region(s) in which Typically Provided PD

1. Northwest	4%
2. Headwaters	1%
3. Arrowhead	4%
4. West Central	6%
5. North Central	2%
6. E Mid-Minnesota	3%
6. W Upper Minnesota Valley	1%
7. W Central	6%
7. E East Central	2%
8. Southwest	2%
9. South Central	4%
10. Southeast	7%
11. Twin Cities	36%
Multiple regions	23%

Held a State Credential as a PD Provider

Yes	69%
No	31%

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[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] American Indian or Alaska Native, Other Asian, Multiracial, and Some other race.