

Research in Brief



Inside the Pre-K Classroom: A Study of Staffing and Stability in State-Funded PreKindergarten Programs

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Summary Statement: Within state-funded pre-k programs, teachers in public school-operated pre-k programs are generally better educated and compensated and have lower rates of turnover than teachers in community-based, privately operated pre-k programs, whose qualifications, compensation and staff turnover more closely resemble those of the child care workforce. Teacher qualifications, compensation and stability affect program quality and child outcomes.

Topic/Goal: To document the current state of staff qualifications, stability, turnover and compensation in state funded pre-K programs and to identify the conditions under which these programs promote a more skilled, stable and better compensated early childhood education workforce.

Method: Examine staff qualifications, compensation and turnover in state funded pre-kindergarten programs in California, Georgia, Illinois (Chicago only), New York (UPK and EPK) and Texas. In addition to profiles of each state's program, the study included comparisons of programs housed in different auspices (publicly operated programs based in public schools or community colleges vs. privately operated programs in community non-profit or for-profit agencies) of a state-funded systems.

Major Findings:

- Teaching staff in publicly operated pre-k programs had higher educational qualifications than staff in privately operated programs. Teaching staff in publicly operated pre-kindergarten programs received higher pay and benefits than teaching staff in privately operated programs.
- There was greater teaching staff stability (less turnover) in publicly operated pre-kindergarten programs than in privately operated programs.
- Pre-kindergarten programs in private settings appear to serve as training and apprenticeship programs to prepare teachers for eventual employment in higher-paying, publicly operated programs, creating a two-tiered pre-kindergarten system.
- Pre-kindergarten programs – private and public – have had mixed success in integrating pre-kindergarten staff with other site staff and infrastructure.
- In general, educational qualifications, compensation and stability of teachers employed in public school-operated pre-kindergarten programs more closely resemble those of K-12 teachers, while community-based, privately operated programs tend to reflect the lower qualifications, lower compensation, and higher staff turnover traditionally associated with the child care workforce.
- Salary levels in pre-k programs – public and private – were generally higher than salary levels in local child care programs (not part of the state-funded system).

For more information: www.ccw.org/pubs/ccw_pre-k_10.4.02.pdf