



Losing Ground in Early Childhood Education: Declining Workforce Qualifications in an Expanding Industry, 1979-2004

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Summary: This report finds that the level of educational attainment for early childhood educators and administrators has dramatically declined between the early 1980s and today, and pay and benefits of early educators and administrators remain below standard across industries.

Topic/Goal: To assess the educational attainment of the early childhood education and care field.

Method: The report used the Current Population Survey—a monthly survey of 60,000 U.S. households—to create a 22-year data set from 1983 to 2004. The report examined the education and compensation of early childhood educators working in center-based private, public, for-profit, non-profit programs as well as Head Start and family child care programs. Public school programs were not a part of the study.

National Findings:

- As compared to the 1980s, a lower share of center-based early childhood educators and administrators has a college degree.
 - The share of U.S. center-based early childhood educators and administrators with at least a 4-year college degree averaged 43% from 1983-85, but only 30% from 2002-2004.
- As compared to the 1980s, a higher proportion of center-based early childhood educators and administrators has a high school education or less.
 - The share of center-based early childhood educators and administrators with a high school education or less climbed from less than 25% in 1983 and 1984 to around 30% in recent years.
- Low wages and benefits help explain education trends in center-based early childhood education.
 - In 2004, college-educated early childhood educators and administrators earned \$13.35 per hour, compared to \$19.23 for female college graduates. On average, early childhood educators and administrators earned only \$10 per hour, less than \$28,000 annually working full-time and year round.
 - Only a third of center-based teachers and administrators get health care through their job, and only a fifth participate in any kind of pension plan.
 - A quarter of center-based early childhood educators and administrators have incomes below 200% of the poverty line, roughly the minimum necessary to pay for basic necessities without public assistance.
- Education levels of early childhood educators are also low in home-based settings.
 - Since 2000, only about 1 in 9 home-based early childhood educators has a college degree. Less than half of home-based early childhood educators have any education beyond high school.
- The most-educated generation of early childhood educators and administrators are now in their 50s.
 - In 1983-87, the most-educated early childhood educators were in their late 30s. By 2000-2004, this same age cohort was in its mid-to-late 50s and remained the most-educated group of teachers in early childhood education.

Massachusetts Findings:

Education Levels of Early Childhood Educators		
	Nationally	Massachusetts
Center-based early childhood educators with a college degree or more	17%	28%
Center-based early childhood educators with a high school degree or less	46%	31%
Home-based early childhood educators with a college degree or more	11%	20%
Home-based early childhood educators with a high school degree or less	56%	42%

- Since the 1980s, the early education and care field has expanded from roughly 10,000 workers to more than 30,000.
- Just over one in four early childhood educators has a college degree compared to 39% of workers in all industries in Massachusetts.
 - In 2000, only a third of center-based early childhood educators in Boston and Worcester had a college degree. In Springfield, Holyoke-Chicopee, Lowell and Fall River-Pawtucket, fewer than a quarter of these educators had a college degree.
- In 2000-2004, early childhood educators earned only \$10.42 compared to \$15.75 for all Massachusetts workers.
- In 2000, 27% of all center- and home-based early childhood educators lived below 200% of the poverty threshold compared to 14% of all workers in all industries.

Recommendations:

- To garner the long-term benefits documented from high-quality early education and care programs, opportunities and supports must be available for early educators to meet higher teacher and administrator training standards.
- Better compensation is also needed in order to keep educated professionals in the early education field.

For full results visit: <http://www.epinet.org/docs/news/losing>