UNDERSTANDING CENTER DIRECTORS: BACKGROUNDS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND LEADERSHIP EFFORTS

Kelly M. Purtell

Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy

The Ohio State University

ExCels Framework from Center Director Perspective

- Center Characteristics
  - Responsibilities/challenges (e.g., turnover)
  - Supports (professional development, support staff)

- What Leaders Bring
  - Backgrounds
  - Goals and Perspectives

- Directors' Perceptions of Leadership in Their Center

Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of center-based early education settings in Franklin County Ohio?

- What do directors bring to the leadership of these centers?

- How do these center and director characteristics shape perceptions of leadership?

Methods

- Online surveys sent to all directors of licensed Type C (center-based) childcare providers in Franklin County OH
  - Must serve preschool-aged children

- Total responses= 150 directors

- Focused on center characteristics, director backgrounds, and director responsibilities
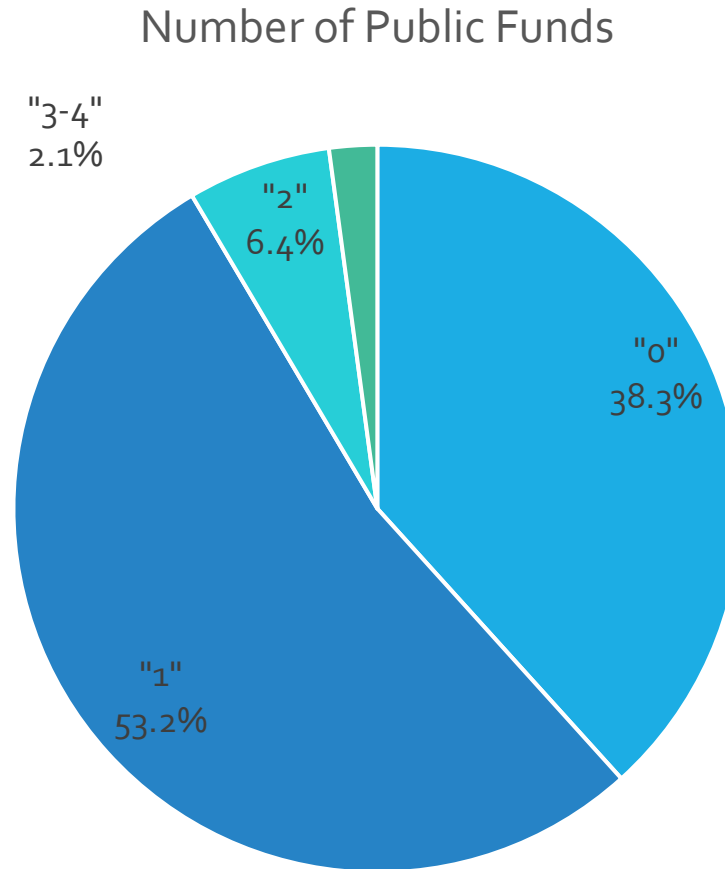
Director Characteristics

	%
Female	97.16
Latinx	3.57
Race/ethnicity	
White	69.50
Black	27.66
Asian	2.84
American Indian/Alaska Native	2.13

Annual Salary
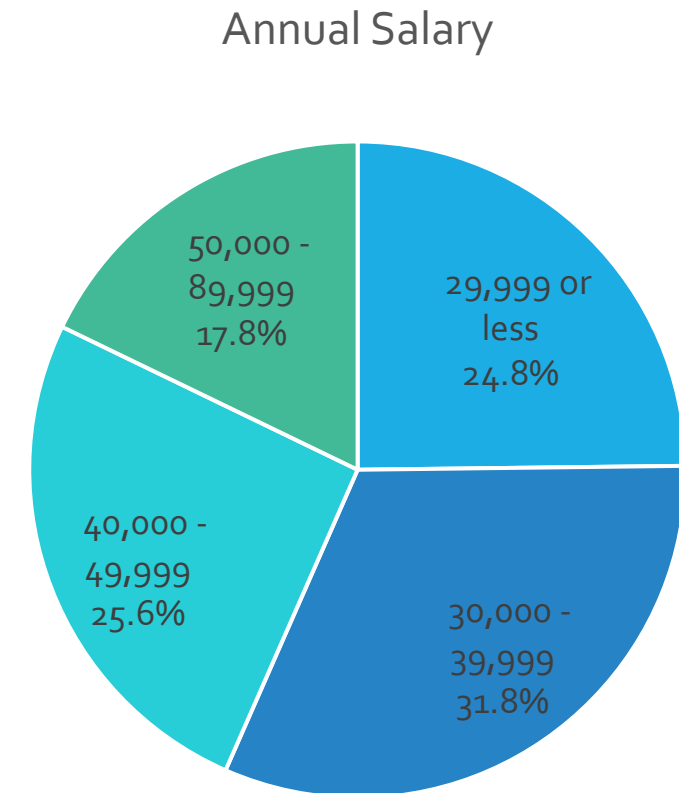
Center Characteristics

	%
Non-profit status	38.30
Average number of days open	
4 (Mon - Thu)	1.42
5 (only weekdays)	95.74
6 (Mon - Sat)	1.42
7 (all week)	1.42
Average number of hours open per day	
3 hours - 11 hours	17.02
11 hours - 12 hours	42.55
12 hours - 13 hours	29.08
13 - 20 hours	11.35

What Influences ECE Leadership: Funding Sources

Number of Public Funds

"3-4"
2.1%

"2"
6.4%

"0"
38.3%

"1"
53.2%

What Influences ECE Leadership: Teacher Turnover

Teacher Turnover

	0	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Lead teacher	29.8	17.7	17.7	15.6	10.6	8.5
Assistant teacher	24.5	13.0	23.0	12.2	12.2	15.1
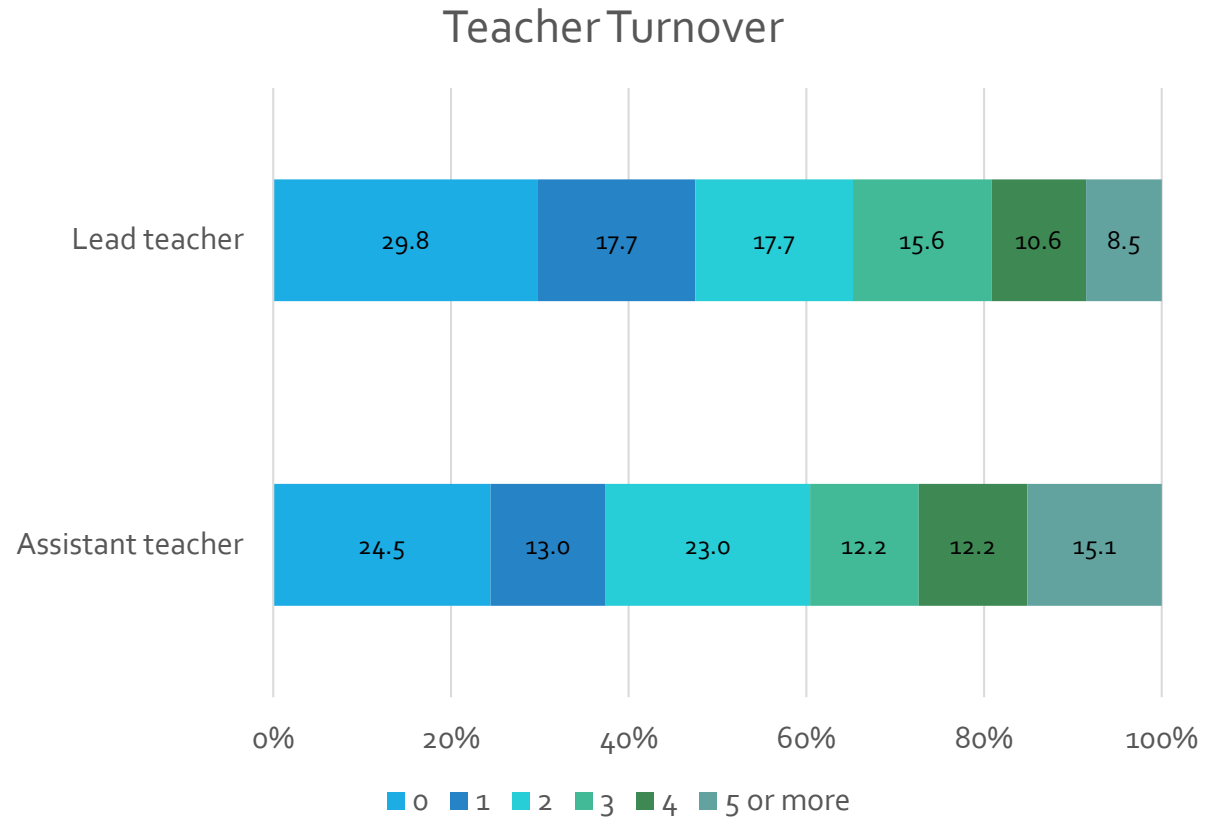
What Influences ECE Leadership: Replacement Challenges

Difficulty of finding teacher replacement

Very easy
1.4%

Fairly easy
14.9%

Very difficult
43.3%

Fairly difficult
40.4%
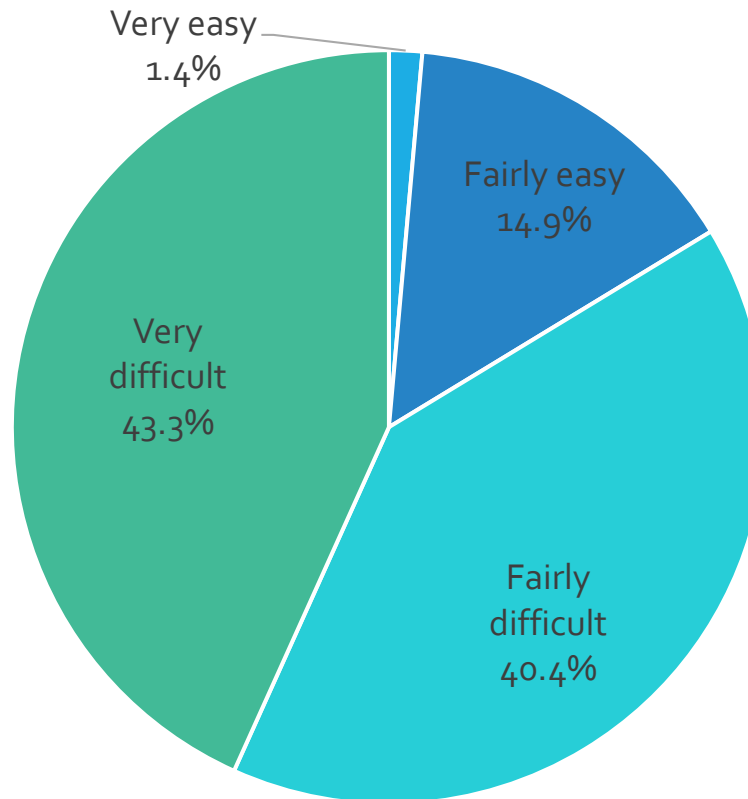
M = 3.26
SD = 0.76
(Range = 1-4)

What Influences ECE Leadership: Support Staff

Other Staff in Center

- Accounting: 23.4%
- Secretary/front dest staff: 20.6%
- Janitorial staff: 34.8%
- Other office staff: 30.5%
- Office interns: 2.8%
- Teaching interns: 12.1%
- None (described here): 34.8%
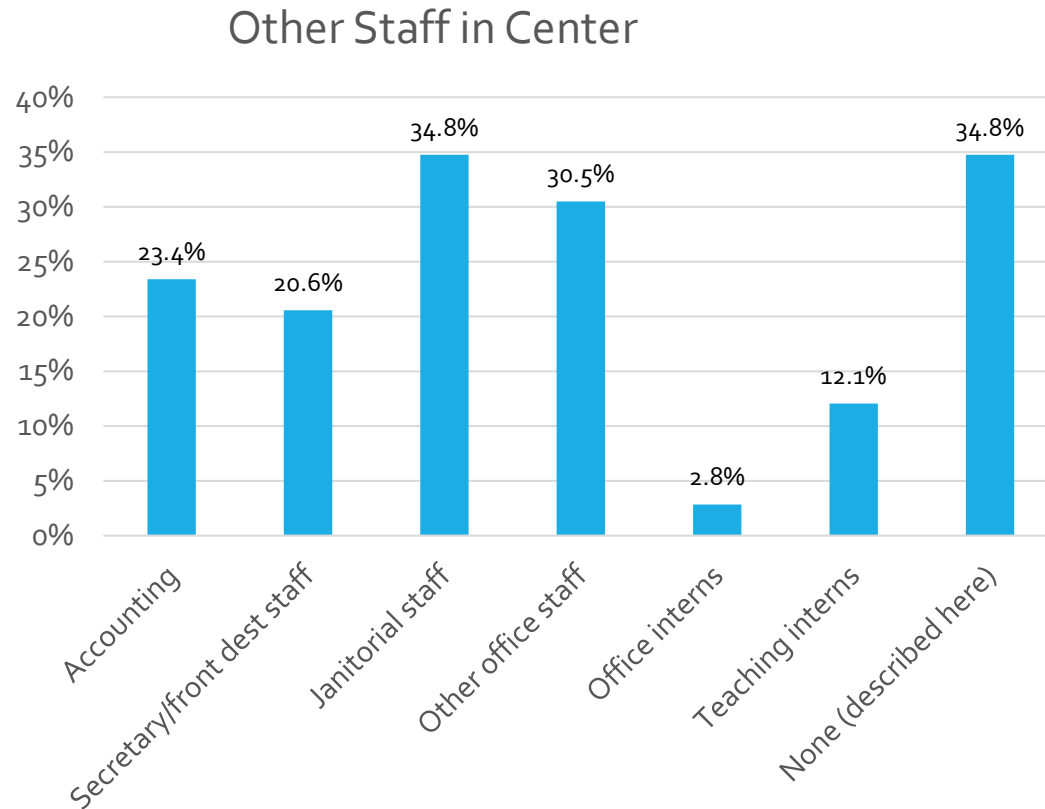
Presence of Office Staff

- No: 45.4%
- Yes: 54.6%

What Influences ECE Leadership: Professional Development (PD)

Director Participation in PD

What Influences ECE Leadership: Professional Development

Level of Support for Director PD

- Very sufficient 12.8%
- Very insufficient 9.9%
- Not sufficient 24.1%
- Somewhat sufficient 53.2%

M = 2.68
SD = 0.82
(Range = 1-4)

What Influences ECE Leadership: Professional Development

Areas of Additional Support Needed to Lead Center

Category	Percentage
Staffing (hiring, etc.)	55.3%
Teacher remediation/coaching	49.7%
Teacher evaluation	48.9%
Instructional leadership	41.1%
Creating positive learning...	38.3%
Working with parents and the...	34.0%
School improvement planning	31.9%
Student assessment	27.7%
Budgeting	25.5%
Data-driven decision making	17.7%
School scheduling	7.8%
Other	5.7%

What Influences ECE Leadership: Job Responsibilities

Director Duty

	Value
Buying/ordering supplies	91.4%
Managing teacher and staff scheduling	99.3%
Managing the budget	79.1%
Assigning children to classrooms	95.7%
Processing admissions	95.0%

What Influences ECE Leadership: Job Responsibilities

Director currently teaching

Yes
28.4%

No
71.6%
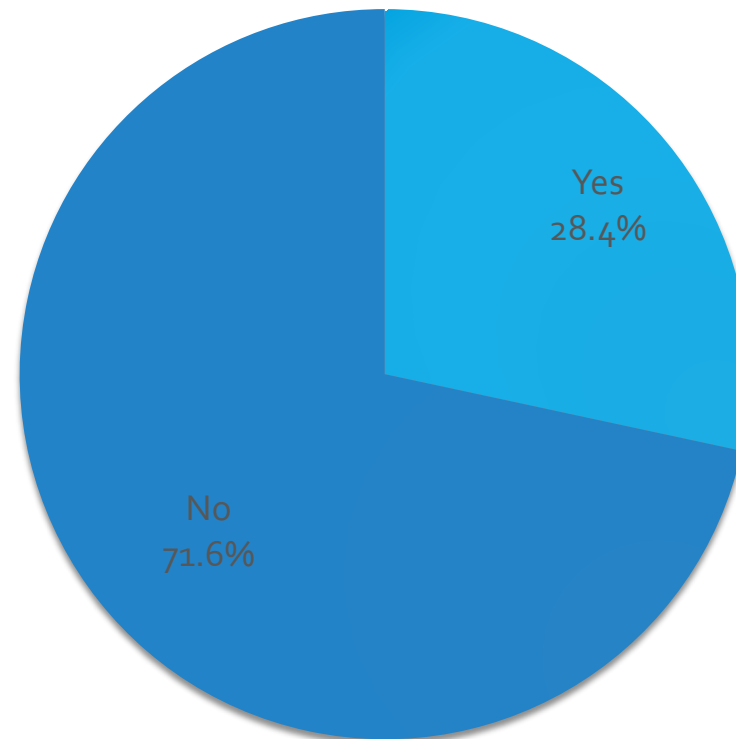
What Leaders Bring: Education

Director highest degree earned

- No degree 8.5%
- Doctorate or first professional 2.8%
- Masters or Educational specialist or professional 21.3%
- Associates 19.2%
- Bachelors 48.2%
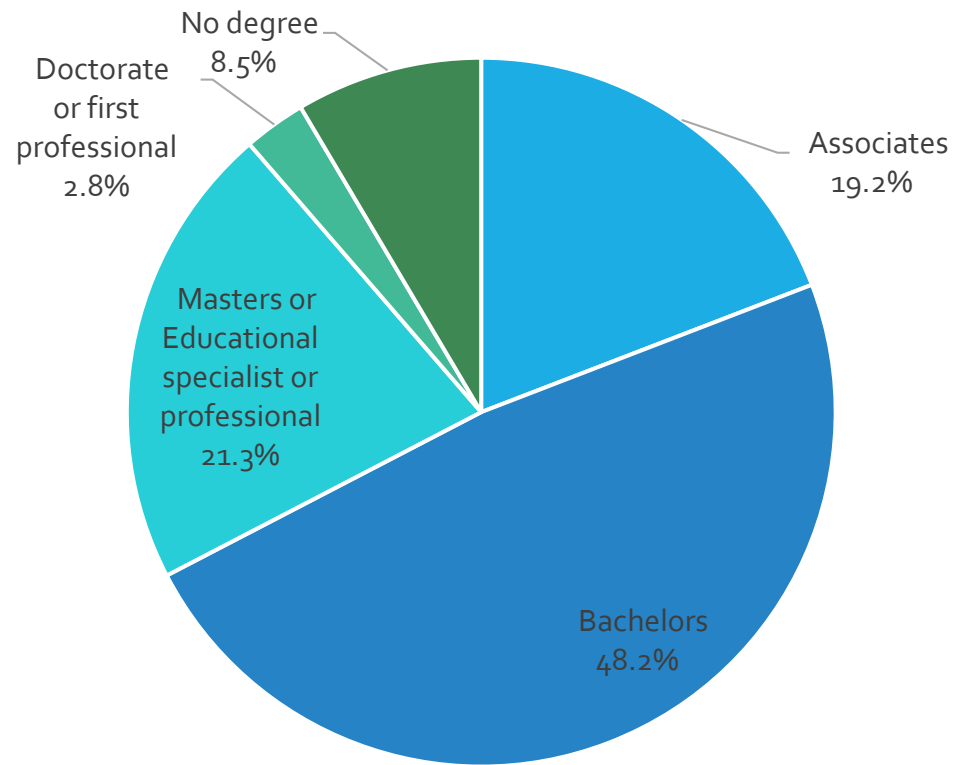
Highest degree earned in education

	Yes	No
Overall	70.5	29.5
Doctorate and equivalent	75.0	25.0
Master's and equivalent	76.7	23.3
Bachelors	66.2	33.8
Associates	74.1	25.9

- Yes
- No
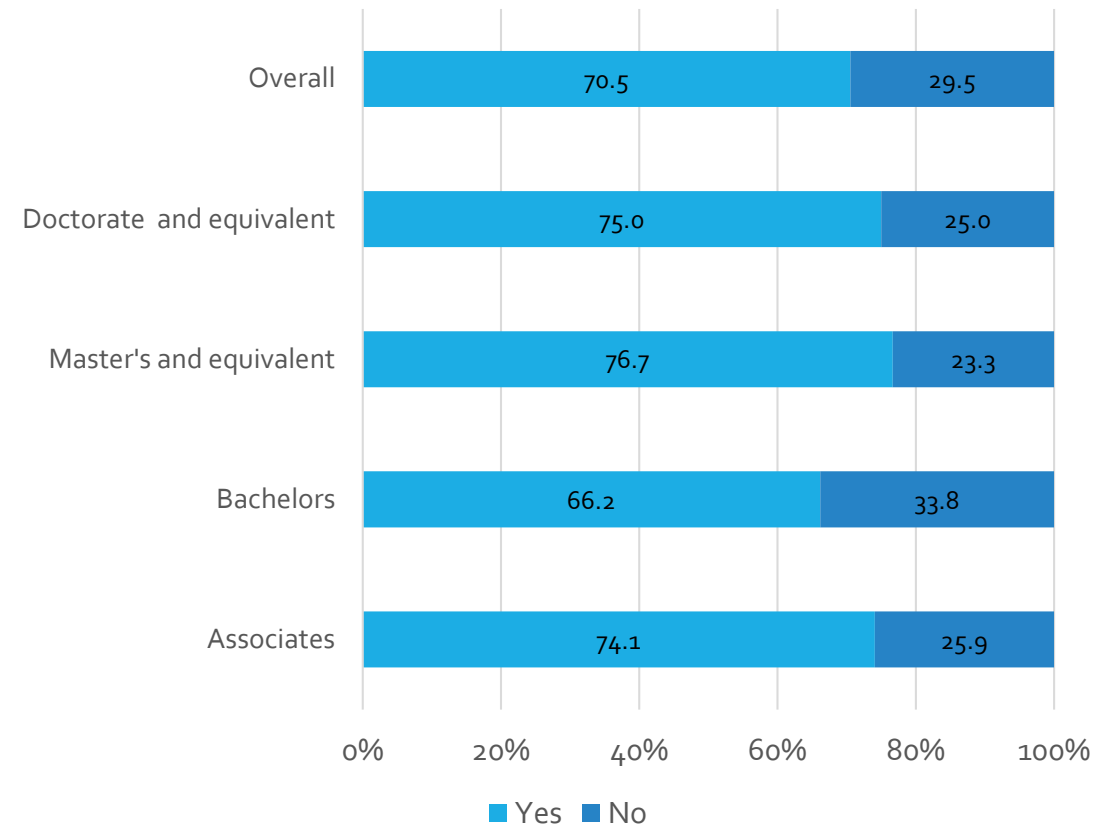
What Leaders Bring: Types of Experience

Director prior experience

	Yes	No
Management	44.0	56.0
Assistant director	42.6	57.5
Curriculum specialist	19.2	80.9

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Yes ■ No
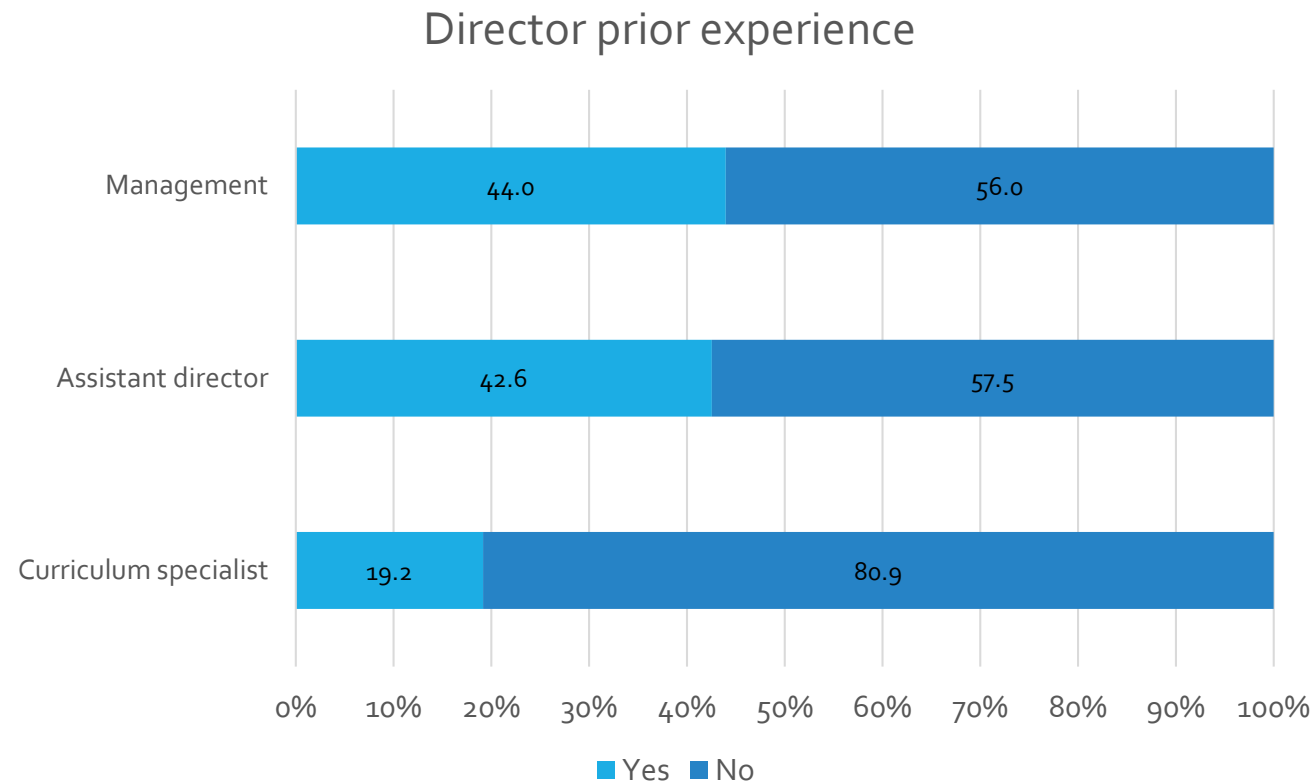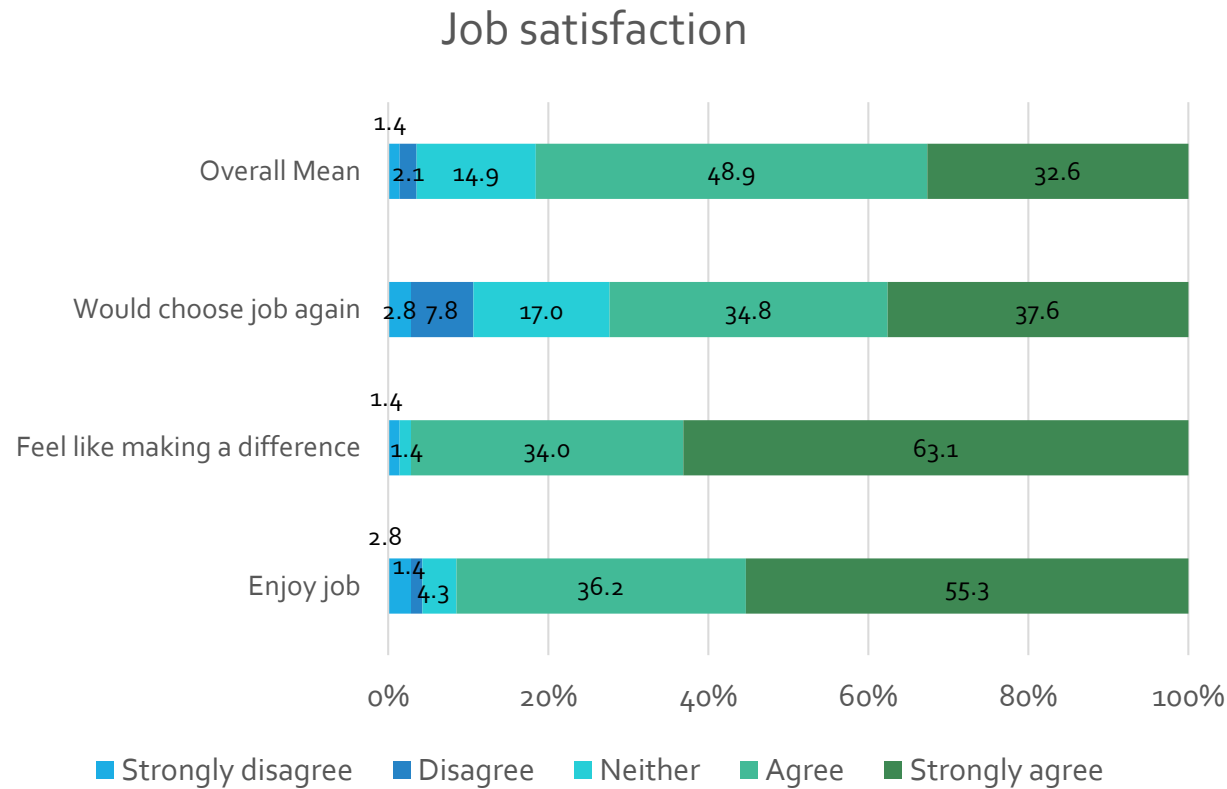
What Leaders Bring: Goals

Director goals for center
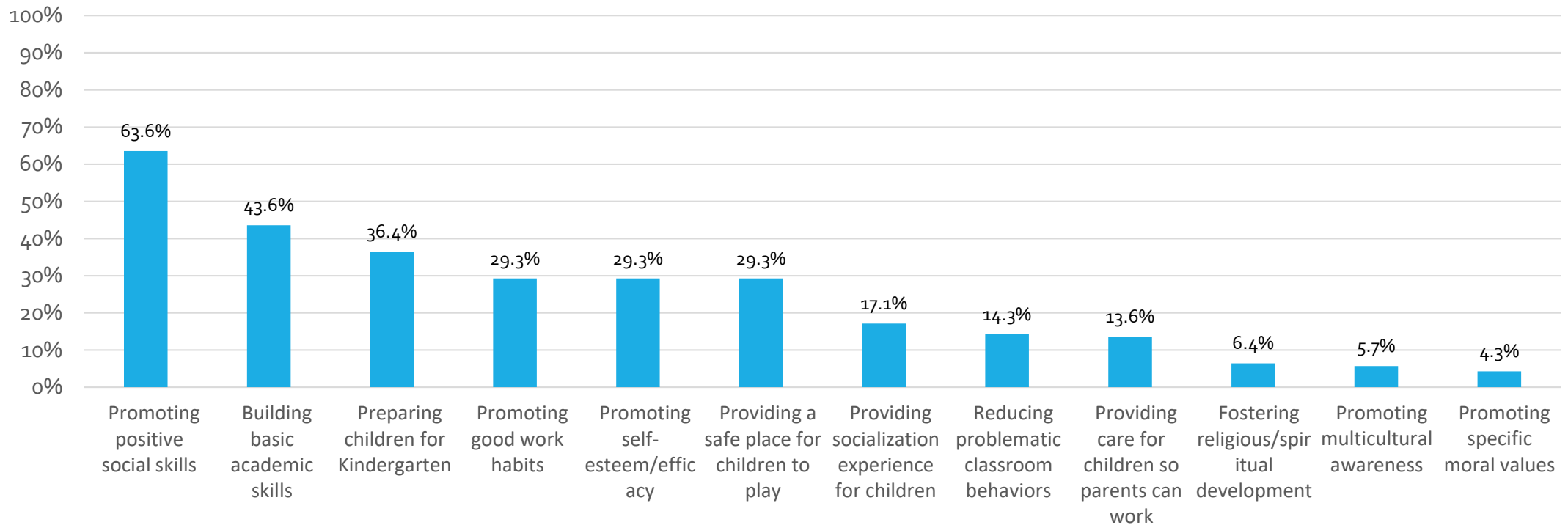
What Leaders Do

- *Perception of teacher support*: how directors agree/disagree with statements about staff support in the center
  - 7 items, 4-point scale, α = .891
  - E.g., "Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them." "The staff are recognized for accomplishments."

- *Efforts to address teacher concerns*: to the extent the center leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about...
  - 9 items, 4-point scale, α = .933
  - E.g., Leadership issues, facilities and resources, professional development, new teacher support

- *Director's influence*: The extent the directors have actual influence on decisions concerning the activities on...
  - 6 items, 4-point scale, α = .681
  - E.g., Establishing curriculum, determining the content of in-service professional development programs, setting discipline policy at the center

What Leaders Do

- Predicting What Leaders Do from Center Characteristics

Predictors	Perception of teacher support b (*SE*)	Efforts to address teacher concerns b (*SE*)	Director's influence b (*SE*)
Number of public funding	-0.051 (0.054)	-0.071 (0.055)	-0.002 (0.050)
Lead teacher turnover	**-0.072 (0.023)****	-0.041 (0.023)	**-0.051 (0.021)***
Assistant teacher turnover	0.017 (0.021)	0.014 (0.022)	-0.014 (0.020)
Whether they have other staff (1 = yes)	-0.011 (0.076)	-0.035 (0.077)	0.052 (0.070)
Level of support for director PD	0.040 (0.046)	-0.017 (0.046)	-0.038 (0.042)
Director is currently teaching (1 = yes)	0.017 (0.086)	-0.019 (0.086)	-0.023 (0.079)
Director's current duty includes budgeting (1 = yes)	**0.225 (0.094)***	0.073 (0.095)	**0.229 (0.087)***
R-squared	.136	.047	.144

What Leaders Do

- Predicting What Leaders Do from What Leaders Bring

Predictors	Perception of teacher support b (SE)	Efforts to address teacher concerns b (SE)	Director's influence b (SE)
Highest degree earned (ref. Associates or less)			
Bachelors	0.043 (0.105)	-0.157 (0.102)	0.109 (0.094)
Masters or more	0.062 (0.125)	-0.013 (0.121)	0.024 (0.111)
Highest degree is in education (1 = yes)	-0.052 (0.090)	0.024 (0.087)	0.050 (0.080)
Years as director in current program	0.001 (0.006)	0.003 (0.006)	**0.013 (0.006)***
Assistant program director experience (1 = yes)	0.020 (0.086)	0.069 (0.083)	-0.111 (0.076)
Management experience outside education (1 = yes)	0.073 (0.084)	0.082 (0.081)	**0.148 (0.074)***
Director job satisfaction	**0.167 (0.060)****	0.087 (0.058)	**0.169 (0.053)****
R-squared	.077	.065	.183

What Leaders Do

Predictors	Perception of teacher support b (SE)	Efforts to address teacher concerns b (SE)	Director's influence b (SE)
Highest degree earned (ref. Associates or less)			
Bachelors	0.021 (0.108)	-0.195 (0.109)	0.005 (0.094)
Masters or more	0.015 (0.124)	-0.061 (0.125)	-0.081 (0.109)
Highest degree is in education (1 = yes)	-0.086 (0.087)	0.008 (0.087)	0.040 (0.076)
Years as director in current program	-0.005 (0.006)	-0.001 (0.006)	0.008 (0.006)
Assistant program director experience (1 = yes)	0.034 (0.085)	0.055 (0.086)	-0.136 (0.074)
Management experience outside education (1 = yes)	0.093 (0.082)	0.122 (0.083)	0.142 (0.072)
Director job satisfaction	**0.160 (0.059)****	0.094 (0.059)	**0.168 (0.051)****
Number of public funding	-0.059 (0.057)	-0.093 (0.058)	-0.039 (0.050)
Lead teacher turnover	**-0.080 (0.024)****	-0.045 (0.025)	**-0.044 (0.021)***
Assistant teacher turnover	0.011 (0.022)	0.010 (0.023)	-0.009 (0.020)
Whether they have other staff (1 = yes)	-0.029 (0.081)	-0.036 (0.081)	0.088 (0.070)
Level of support for director PD	0.025 (0.048)	-0.023 (0.049)	-0.045 (0.042)
Director is currently teaching (1 = yes)	-0.048 (0.092)	-0.072 (0.093)	-0.062 (0.081)
Director's current duty includes budgeting (1 = yes)	0.143 (0.103)	0.004 (0.104)	**0.213* (0.090)**
Constant	2.681 (0.335)***	3.152 (0.338)***	2.946 (0.292)***
R-squared	.219	.132	.314

Conclusions

- Directors have varied responsibilities and types of preparation.

- Characteristics of both the center and the director influenced their perceptions of their leadership.

- More research is needed to map the center conditions that inhibit or promote positive leadership.
  - Need for information from multiple perspectives

Thank You!

- Collaborators: Sugene Cho, Jessica Logan, Joshua Peri

- Funders: OSU EHE Office of Research & Foundation for Child Development

purtell.15@osu.edu

The Whole Leadership Framework and State Systems Building

Child Care and Early Education Policy Research Consortium (CCEEPRC)
Annual Meeting | April 18, 2019

MICHAEL ABEL, Ph.D. | Director of Research and Evaluation

TOM LAYMAN | QRIS (ExceleRate Illinois®) Policy Director, Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development

Whole Leadership Framework
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS (BIRTH TO THIRD GRADE)

PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP

Leading the art and science of teaching with an emphasis on educator dispositions and high quality interactions with children. This includes ensuring fidelity to curricular philosophy, assessing children's development and learning, using data for evaluation, and optimizing learning environments.

- **Instructional leadership:** Supporting educators in implementing curriculum
- **Family engagement:** Promoting partnerships with families and fostering family leadership

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

Coordinating work and mobilizing people to ensure the organization remains stable and continues to grow.

- **Operational leadership:** Hiring and supporting staff, overseeing budgets, and fostering positive workplace climates
- **Strategic leadership:** Goal setting and guiding future program direction
- **Advocacy leadership:** Acting as an ambassador for the needs of children, families, and programs
- **Community leadership:** Collaborating with organizations within the local community on behalf of the children and families served

WHOLE LEADERSHIP

is an **inter-dependent relationship** that exists between leadership domains. A **balanced perspective** is necessary when performing administrative functions.

LEADERSHIP ESSENTIALS

Foundational competencies and individual qualities necessary for leading people that are expressed in personal leadership styles and dispositions. Leadership essentials are often developed through reflective practice.

Personal Attributes:

- Self-efficacy
- Empathy
- Creativity
- Authenticity
- Humility
- Transparency
- Adaptability
- Learning

Together, function as an integrated, balanced whole.

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Administrator Role Perception Survey

- Phase I conducted in 2018
- 1,530 program administrators, from 49 states and DC
- Aligned to the *Whole Leadership Framework*
- What did the survey measure?
  - Administrators' perceptions about their role and their jobs
  - Administrators' development stage
    - Stage 1: Novice,
    - Stage 2: Proficient
    - Stage 3: Advanced
  - Administrators' leadership self-efficacy beliefs (confidence)
- Differences among administrators at different stages
- Self-efficacy scale factored onto the *Whole Leadership Framework*

Confidence of New Administrators

ROLE PERCEPTIONS WHEN FIRST BECOMING AN ADMINISTRATOR

50%	I hoped no one would find out how scared I was		I felt confident and self-assured	50%
62%	I was not prepared for the kinds of issues I encountered		I felt well-trained for my administrative position	38%
36%	My expectations for myself were unrealistic		My expectations for myself were realistic	65%
46%	I worried the teachers/ parents wouldn't like me		I was confident everyone would like me	55%

n = 1,500

Differences by Administrators' Stage

LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY – Least Confident

NOVICE	PROFICIENT	ADVANCED
Budgeting, cash flow, and financial management		
Use performance appraisal as catalyst for change		
	Recruit, select, and orient staff	
	Protect time for staff to plan	
Use technology to support teaching and learning		Use technology to support teaching and learning and administrative practices

Ready to Lead – Leadership Academy

- Community of Practice for newly hired early childhood administrators

- Develops Leadership Essentials
  - Power of reflection and self-awareness
  - Leadership style
  - Transitioning from peer to supervisor
  - Productivity and project management

- Aligned with the Illinois Director Credential

Illinois QRIS

- Problem
  - Quality standards treated as checklist
  - State-funded TA wasted on programs without "cultures of improvement"
- Subcommittee charge
  - Support program leaders to implement CQI
- Question 1: What does a program leader do?

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Early Childhood Development
Illinois Early Learning Council

What does a program leader do?

Leadership Essentials

1. Lead by example
2. Establish time for communication
3. Develop teams; share leadership
4. Build professional learning into program improvement

Administrative Leadership

5. Engage families and staff to shape program mission and values
6. Know program standards
7. Facilitate annual goal-setting
8. Lead weekly or monthly CQI cycles

Pedagogical Leadership

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Using the framework

- Prepared inventory of public supports for any of the 8 components

- Made recommendations for enhanced support

- Planning use by Communities of Practice:
  - Constructivist approach

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