

## EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WHAT WE KNOW AND DON'T KNOW



- ✦ **The quality of a child's early learning experiences provides the foundation for future success in school and in life**
  - ✦ **We know:** Quality learning experiences are the result of purposeful planning on the part of parents, caregivers, teachers, and policy-makers
  - ✦ **We don't know:** How much, to what extent, and under what conditions professional preparation, training, and supports for practitioners translate into quality learning experiences for young children
- ✦ **Quality of care is associated with caregiver continuity, staff wages, and quality of work environments**
  - ✦ **We know:** Rates of practitioner retention are related to positive work environments that offer appropriate support, salaries, and benefits
  - ✦ **We don't know:** The combinations of support and conditions (e.g., job satisfaction) that matter most to practitioners and reduce turnover
- ✦ **Providing positive models for all children from their own culture, as well as from others, is essential to quality**
  - ✦ **We know:** Cultural factors, including support of home languages, have an impact on English language development and educational success of children from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds
  - ✦ **We don't know:** The most effective methods and policies to build authentic representation and diversify the early childhood workforce and leadership
- ✦ **Education, preparation, and training that include specific early childhood development content are associated with better quality care**
  - ✦ **We know:** Professional preparation and training must focus on content, delivery, and competency demonstration to be effective
  - ✦ **We don't know:** The training and education thresholds that result in improved quality.
  - ✦ **We know:** Inconsistencies in definitions and measurement of professional development hinder the determination of consistent findings across research studies
    - "Some college" differs greatly across studies, from one-credit courses to an accumulation of credits that would meet associate, bachelor, or advanced degree requirements
    - Training and certifications have been combined in many studies
  - ✦ **We don't know:** The implications of findings for multiple populations and settings
    - Most studies on training have been conducted with family child care providers
    - Studies that include higher education coursework have been done primarily with center-based practitioners and do not clarify the specifics of early childhood content

The Workgroup on Definitions and Measurement of Professional Development is sponsored by the Child Care Bureau in collaboration with the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, the Department of Health and Human Services and other federal agencies. The workgroup's purpose is to take specific steps towards addressing the problems with definition and measurement of the early childhood workforce. More information is available on Child Care and Early Education Research Connections' Web site at <http://childcareresearch.org>.

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