


Miami-Dade Quality Counts Workforce Study



*Early Care and Education
Research to Practice Brief
May 2014*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

A body of research suggests that a relationship exists between the training and education of teachers in early childhood programs and child outcomes (Barnett, 2003; Whitebook, 2003). Practitioners who are better prepared professionally are likely to do a better job in working with young children. Understanding how children grow, learn, and develop is essential in implementing evidence-based curricula to improve school readiness and overall child well-being. Moreover, the quality of the interactions between the adults and children in the classroom plays a significant role helping children grow, thrive and reach their potential (Campbell et al., 2002; Ghazvini and Mullis, 2002; Reynolds et al., 2007; and Schweinhart et al., 2005).

With this knowledge, The Children's Trust has been investing significant resources aimed at improving the competence and retention of the early childhood workforce through career advising, scholarships, and wage supplements. These investments support Quality Counts, Miami-Dade County's quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs launched in 2008. With on-going funding from The Children's Trust, the Children's Forum manages the Quality Counts Career Center to provide career advising, professional development system support, scholarship administration, wage supplements, and operate the Professional Development Registry as a tool to capture data, track progress and evaluate results. This Workforce Study Update serves as an important resource for stakeholders and funders to evaluate the success of these initiatives, communicate key findings, and inform future policy and practice considerations.



BACKGROUND

To understand the nuances of the early childhood workforce in Miami-Dade County, a comprehensive workforce study was conducted and published in January 2011 (Clements, 2011). Subsequently, annual workforce study updates have been produced. The current study represents an update based on employment and education data available as of March 2014 for program sites participating in the full Professional Development (PD) Services offered through the Quality Counts Career Center (QCCC) encompassing career advising, wage supplements, and educational scholarships. Programs include child care centers and family child care homes (FCCHs)¹. This study also provides information on how the workforce has changed since its initial entry into Quality Counts (QC) as well as an in-depth look at factors impacting the earnings of the QC workforce. The Professional Development Registry includes a wealth of workforce information for Miami-Dade early care and education (ECE) teaching staff and directors at programs participating in QC, making it possible to understand the characteristics of the QC workforce and offer a picture of the influence of QC on ECE training opportunities and staff qualifications.

A summary of key findings associated with each research question along with recommendations for the future are presented within this Research to Practice Brief.

¹The sample of QC programs described in this study does not include Head Start centers or Miami-Dade County Public Schools pre-K classrooms because those programs do not presently receive full professional development services offered through the QCCC.

FINDINGS

DEMOGRAPHICS

What are the characteristics of ECE programs in QC?

- ▶ 3,246 practitioners at 362 program sites receive PD services.
- ▶ 301 centers employ 97% of practitioners.
- ▶ 61 FCCHs employ 3% of practitioners.

What are the characteristics of the ECE workforce participating in QC?

- ▶ Primarily female.
- ▶ Middle aged (44 years on average).
- ▶ Largely Spanish speaking and of Hispanic origin.
- ▶ Originating from over 30 different countries.
- ▶ Cuba and the United States most prevalent countries of origin.
- ▶ Having relatively low education levels.

Exhibit 1. Percentage of Practitioners by Primary Language Spoken (N = 3,246).

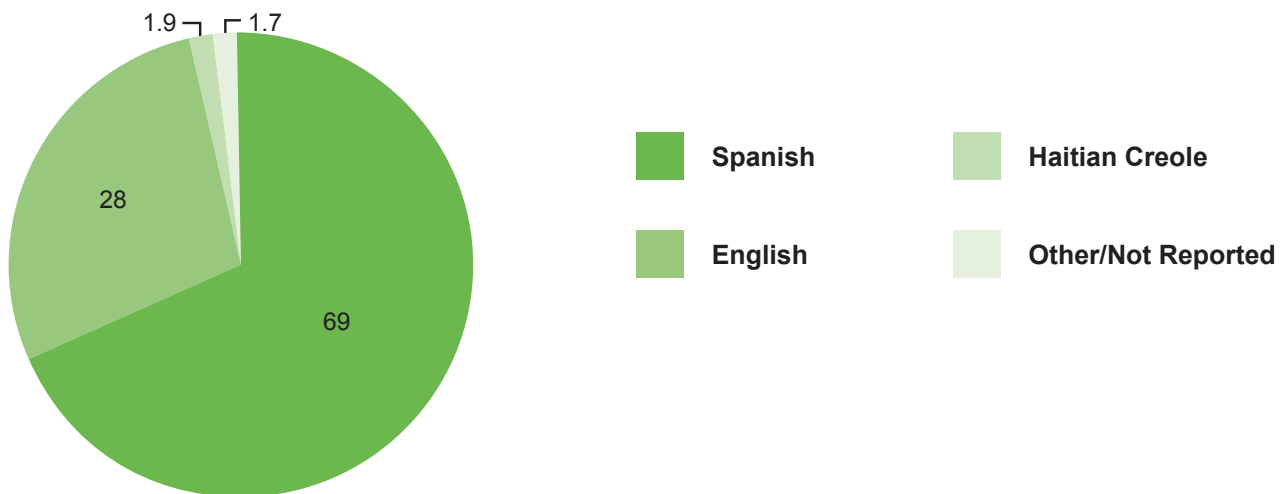
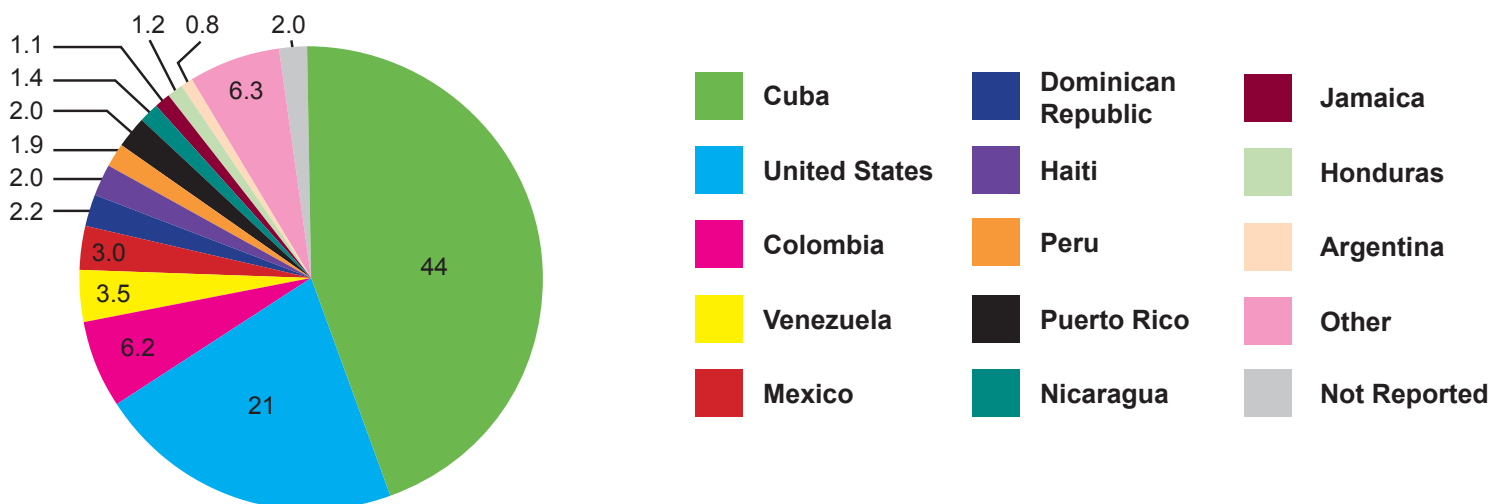


Exhibit 2. Percentage of Practitioners by Country of Origin (N = 3,246).



TRAINING AND EDUCATION

What is the educational attainment of the ECE workforce participating in QC?

Highest Education Level:

- ▶ 54% = high school diploma
- ▶ 12% = associate's degree/equivalent
- ▶ 20% = bachelor's degree
- ▶ 2% = graduate level degree
- ▶ 12% = no diploma/degree on record

Staff Credential:

- ▶ 77% of teaching staff hold a DCF issued Florida Staff Credential or FCCPC and/or National CDA
 - ▷ 77% hold a Florida Staff Credential / FCCPC
 - ▷ 12% hold a National CDA

Director Credential:

- ▶ 53% of program sites have a Director with a Foundational Level I or II Director Credential
- ▶ 47% of program sites have a director with an Advanced Director Credential

Has educational attainment improved since the inception of QC? Has progress been made on practitioner career goals?

- ▶ 9% improved overall educational level
- ▶ 79% made progress toward goals
- ▶ 79% of teaching staff who did not have a Florida Staff Credential or equivalent at QC entry now have obtained one
- ▶ 20% of program sites whose director did not have an Advanced Credential at QC entry now have one
- ▶ 39% of Child Care WAGE\$® (WAGE\$) participants increased on the WAGE\$ salary supplement scale
- ▶ Longer WAGE\$ participation linked with greater increases on the WAGE\$ scale

Note: Child Care WAGE\$® is a licensed program created by the Child Care Services Association in North Carolina. Teachers meeting participation requirements² receive a salary supplement on a semi-annual basis according to an incremental scale ranging from Level 1 to Level 8. Each level specifies a required level of education or continuing coursework toward degrees with an accompanying supplement amount. Since movement up the scale is incremental, teachers can increase the amount of their supplement by participating in ongoing education to eventually earn a degree. The highest level requires an advanced degree in early childhood or child development.



²Must remain with their employer for the previous six months and earn less than \$17.50 per hour and meet priority criteria that are specific to Miami-Dade including, but not limited to the completion of 3 ECE credits within two years with priority given to those working in designated geographical areas.

Exhibit 3. Percentage of Teaching Staff Holding a Staff Credential by Credential Type (n = 3,246).

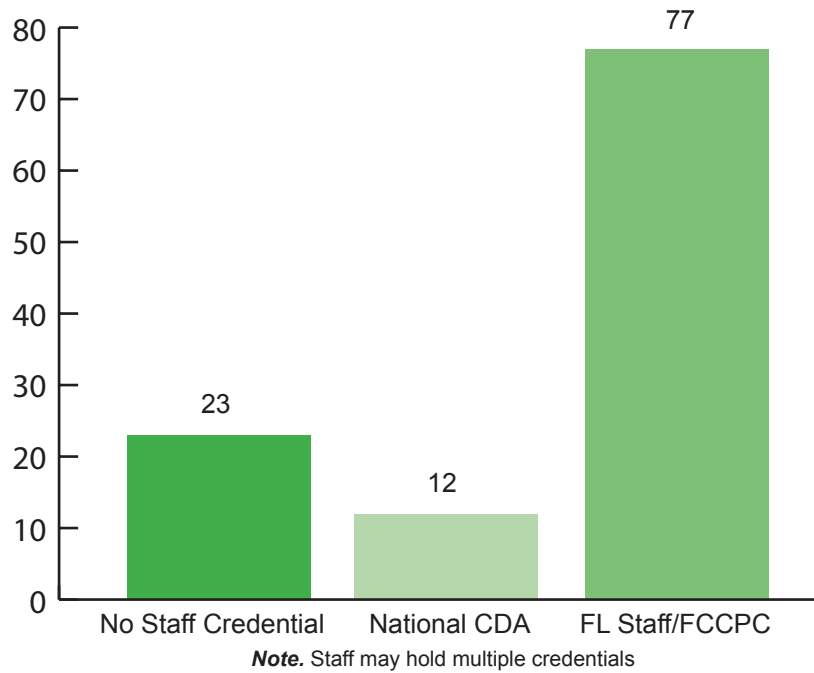


Exhibit 4. Percentage of Practitioners Improving their Highest Education Level (N = 2,109).

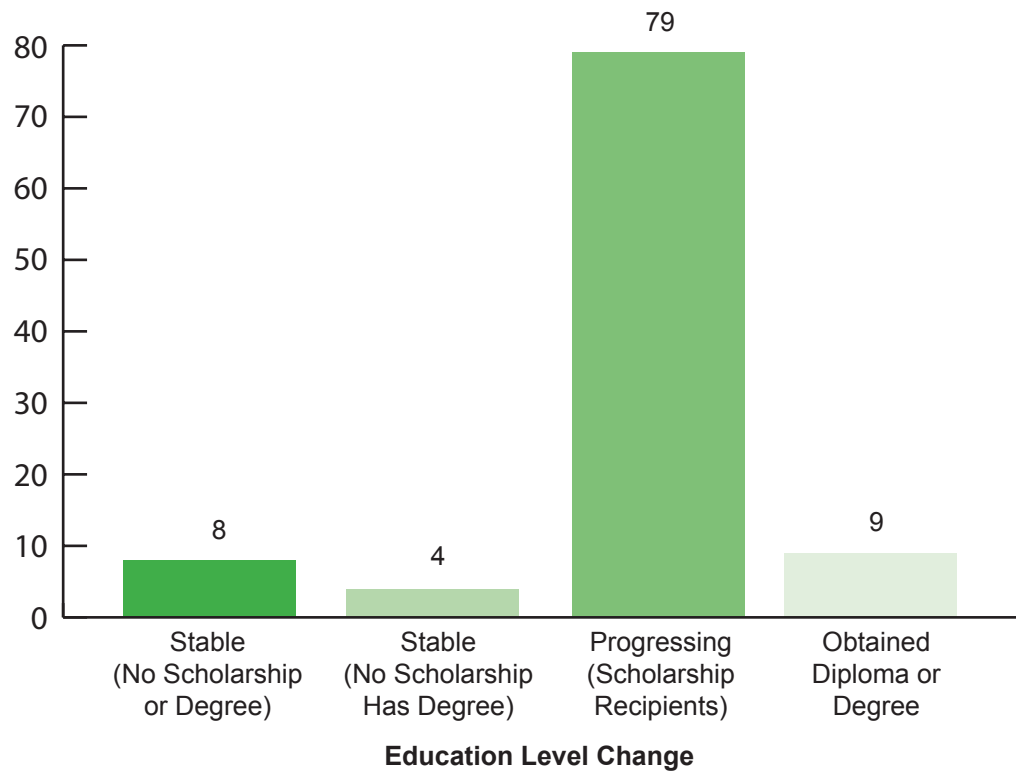


Exhibit 5. WAGE\$ Performance by Years of Participation: Percent with Low, Moderate, and High Participation Falling Within Performance Groups. (N = 558)



Change in WAGE\$ Scale Level From First to Most Recent WAGE\$ Check

Stable = Stable WAGE\$ scale level of 1 to 5 from initial level to most recent level

Progressing = Increased one WAGE\$ level or remained stable at Scale Level 6 or 7

Excelling = Increased two or more scale levels or remained stable at Scale Level 8

What trends emerge in educational attainment and scholarship usage over time?

- ▶ On average it takes about 2 to 2.5 years for practitioners to obtain a higher education level during QC participation.
- ▶ Those practitioners who improve their education level during QC participation are more likely to accept credit-bearing scholarships than scholarships for non-credit trainings or document translations.

Note: Achieving a higher education level includes obtaining a high school diploma or college degree during QC participation.

Exhibit 6. Average Number of Years to Achieve a Diploma/Degree since QC Entry.

Education Change Group	Average Years to Achieve Current Education Level (N = 196)
None to HS (n = 93)	2.2
HS to AA (n = 72)	1.7
AA to BA (n = 18)	2.5
HS to BA (n = 9)	2.5
BA to MA (n = 4)	1.7

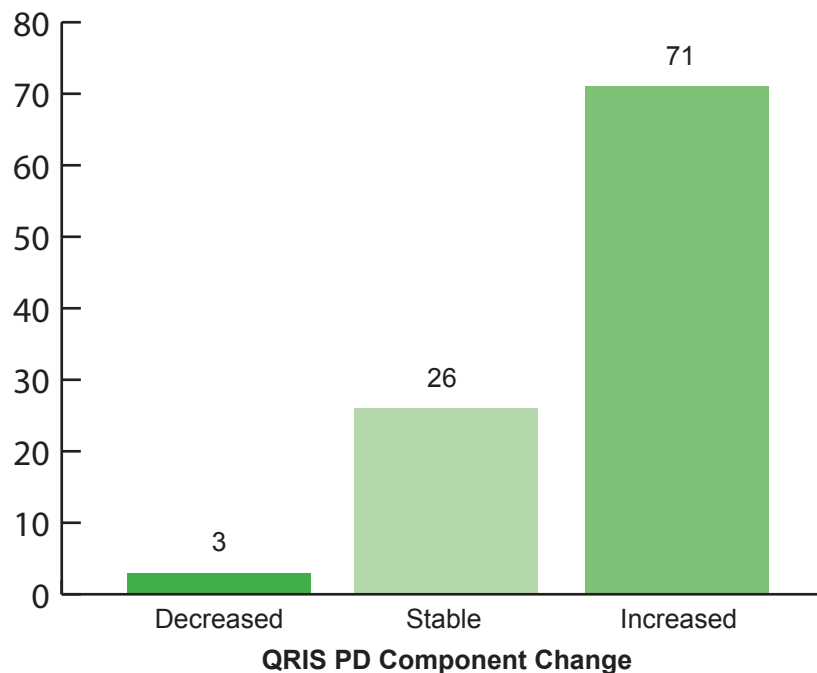
STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Have Staff Qualifications points improved since inception of the QC initiative?

(Staff Qualifications is a component of the program standards measured by QC. Under the QRIS 1.0 standards staff qualifications points ranged from 1 to 5.)

- ▶ 59% of programs showed improvement on staff qualifications points.
- ▶ 70% of programs with room to move up on the QRIS 1.0 scale showed improvement on staff qualifications points.
- ▶ The longer a program participates in QC, the more likely they will have improved their staff qualifications points.

Exhibit 7. Percentage of Programs by Change in QRIS Staff Qualifications Component for Programs with Room to Move Up (N = 217 programs).



Note. These data are based on automated staff component ratings maintained in the PD Registry.

EMPLOYMENT AND BENEFITS

What is the employment status of the ECE workforce?

- ▶ 86% employed full-time
- ▶ Employed at current program for 6 years on average
 - ▷ Directors employed at current program for 8 years on average
 - ▷ Teachers employed at current program for 5 years on average

What are the earnings of the ECE workforce participating in QC?

- ▶ Median hourly wage for the full workforce = \$8.50
 - ▷ Directors median hourly wage = \$12.00
 - ▷ Teachers median hourly wage = \$8.50

What benefits are available and accessed by the ECE workforce participating in QC?

- ▶ 16% received no benefits
- ▶ 82% received one or more benefits
- ▶ 2% did not report their benefit status

Of those who received benefits, rates for various benefit categories included:

- ▶ 80% = Paid Time Off
- ▶ 47% = Professional Development
- ▶ 28% = Health
- ▶ 15% = Retirement

What factors are associated with earnings of the ECE workforce participating in QC?

A practitioner's hourly wage is impacted by several factors which they can directly influence to improve their earning potential and marketability within the ECE workforce. Taking various demographic and educational factors into account, statistical analyses show the hourly wage of QC participants is impacted by a practitioner's:

1. **English Language Skills:** Primary English speakers can expect to make \$1.43 more per hour on average than those whose primary language is not English.
2. **Years of employment with their current program:** For every 5 years remaining with their current employer practitioners can expect to make \$1.00 more per hour.
3. **Educational Status:** Practitioners holding college degrees can expect to make an average of \$1.92 more an hour compared to non-degreed practitioners. Practitioners with 18 college credits in early childhood (18 ECE credits) can expect to make about \$0.66 more an hour than those without it. Taking a closer look, education status influences earning potential differently depending on whether the practitioner is a primary English speaker. Having 18 ECE credits only has a substantial impact on hourly wage above and beyond holding a degree if the practitioner's primary language is not English. Holding a degree significantly impacts wages regardless of English competency, but holding a degree has a larger impact on hourly wage for practitioners whose primary language is English.

These findings show the "unique" contribution of each individual factor in the context of all of the other factors. For example, having a high comfort level with the English language (as measured by primary language) significantly impacts hourly wage even after taking the impact of other factors into consideration such as years of employment with the current employer, educational experience, classroom age taught, and program location³.

It is noteworthy that being of Hispanic or Haitian ethnicity is significantly related to lower hourly wages but not after taking primary language into consideration. This suggests that a practitioner's proficiency and comfort level with the English language, an ability they can improve upon, affects what they are paid by their employer much more so than their native ethnicity.

In summary, having strong English language skills, acquiring 18 ECE credits or a degree, and remaining with their employer longer-term can help practitioners garner higher wages and increase their value at their programs and in the ECE workforce. Acquiring 18 ECE credits can have a particularly large impact on the earning capacity for those in the process of building their English language skills. Those whose primary language is not English and who have 18 ECE credits make a median of \$10.00 per hour relative to \$8.50 for their same language peers who do not have 18 ECE credits. As well, developing strong English language skills can help practitioners get the most value out of their degrees. The median hourly wage of those practitioners holding a degree and having English as their primary language is \$12.00 an hour relative to \$8.50 for practitioners not meeting these two criteria.

Overall, practitioners with college degrees earn the highest wages. However, it has taken two to three years to obtain a degree for the small group (n = 103) of practitioners that have accomplished this goal since their QC participation. Most practitioners have not obtained a degree; some are currently working towards a degree and others experience a variety of barriers to obtaining a degree. This makes it especially encouraging that practitioners can increase their earning potential by building their English language proficiency and obtaining 18 ECE credits.

Insomuch as nearly three-quarters of the Miami-Dade QC workforce identifies a primary language other than English an important take-home message for this large majority of practitioners is that they can strengthen their English proficiency and obtain ECE credits to improve their earning potential. These goals are within reach and can improve their competence in working with young children and increase their value in the marketplace.

³Analyses also showed that practitioners teaching classrooms with preschool age children make significantly higher wages than those teaching younger children and practitioners whose program is located in a higher income census tract make significantly higher hourly wages than those working in a lower income census tract.

TURNOVER

What is the overall turnover rate for QC programs? What are the annual trends in turnover rates for a tracking sample of QC programs?

- ▶ The median turnover rate for staff employed at QC programs during the 2013 calendar year was 20%.
- ▶ Turnover rates fluctuate some but remain relatively stable over a 5 year period of QC participation ranging from median rates of 18% to 23%.

How do QC educational scholarships impact turnover rates?

- ▶ Programs with high⁴ scholarship usage among practitioners are 4.5 times more likely to have low⁵ turnover.
- ▶ Programs with high scholarship usage had 19% staff turnover among practitioners, relative to 33% turnover for programs with low scholarship usage.

How does hourly wage impact turnover rates?

- ▶ Programs with lower turnover rates pay their practitioners significantly higher average hourly wages (\$9.26 relative to \$8.24 per hour).

⁴High scholarship usage is defined as at least 70 percent of practitioners at the program have used a QC or local T.E.A.C.H. scholarship during their QC participation.

⁵Low turnover rates are defined as a rate of 25% staff turnover or less.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings provide an opportunity to reflect on existing policies and practices and make adjustments to ensure the best outcomes for children. Low wages continue to challenge the field in retaining a qualified workforce equipped with the skills needed to improve child outcomes. Practitioners receiving wage supplements through the Child Care WAGES program are more likely to remain in their programs and improve their education. While funding is limited to expand the existing program, there are some opportunities for practitioners to increase their earning potential, particularly for those who are less proficient in English. The following are presented for consideration:

- ▶ Career advisors can communicate these findings to their practitioners who have limited English proficiency to encourage educational pursuits.
- ▶ Educational institutions might consider expanding opportunities for practitioners to access both credit-bearing and continuing education bilingual programs that are contextual in design to help practitioners acquire English and improve their knowledge and skills in working with young children.
- ▶ A comprehensive communications strategy to engage, support, and encourage practitioners in collaboration with system partners and other stakeholders (child care licensing, educational institutions, community-based training programs, etc.) could be useful to increase awareness and build capacity.
- ▶ Joint efforts to expand opportunities for practitioners to access 18 credit hours in ECE could be pursued as data suggest that it increases their earning potential and marketability.

In summary, supports provided by the QCCC, in particular scholarships and wage supplements appear to be effective in motivating practitioners to pursue higher levels of education and remain at their employment for longer periods of time. As the research suggests, an educated, fairly compensated workforce and continuity of care provide better outcomes for the children served (Barnett, 2003; Torquati, Raikes, & Huddleston-Casas, 2007; Whitebook, 2003).

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