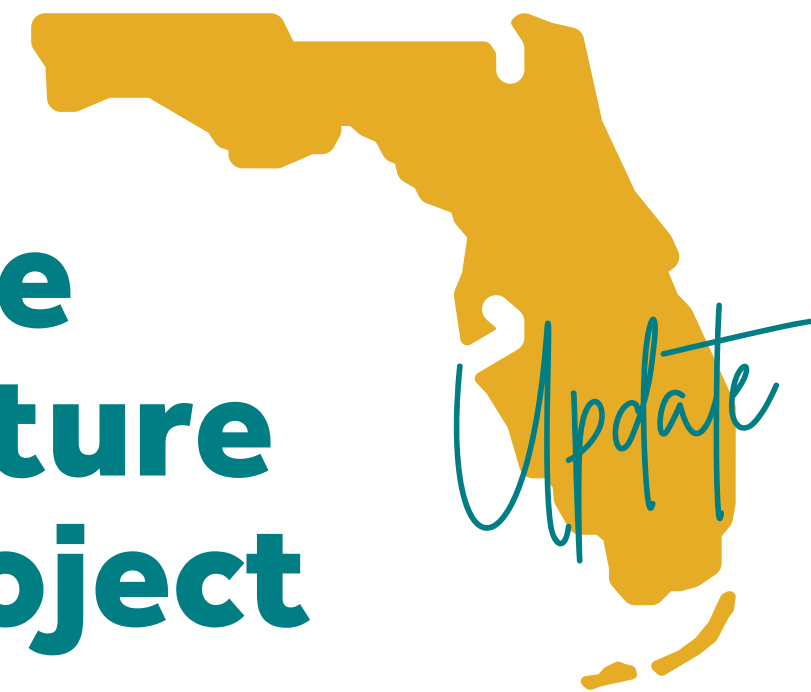


Listening Tour Findings & Next Steps

The Children's
Movement
of Florida

**The
Future
Project**

Imagining a New Early
Learning Future in Florida



The Future Project



1

LISTENING TOUR
Let's Talk Sessions
April to November 2022

2

STEERING COMMITTEE
Draft roadmap
October 2022 to March 2023

3

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK TOUR
Finalize roadmap and activate change
April to June 2023

Guiding Questions

Parents:

- Family support
- Early childhood resources
- Dreams and aspirations

Owners/directors:

- Staffing
- Quality
- Needed Support

Educators:

- Satisfaction
- Preparation
- Partnerships with families

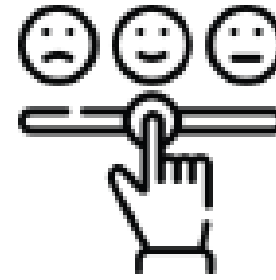


Key Themes



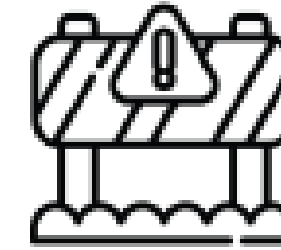
Dreams and Aspirations

What participants said they want for themselves, their children, and early care and education in Florida.



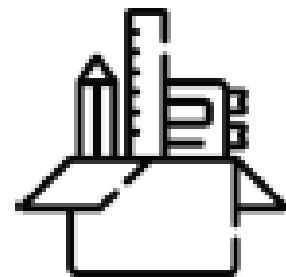
Satisfaction

What participants enjoy or describe as working well for them related to early care and education.



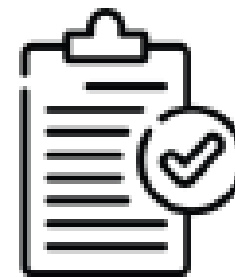
Barriers for Families

Challenges or frustrations participants identified based on their experiences with early care and education in Florida.



Early Learning Workforce

What participants had to say about the perceptions of – and challenges facing – Florida's early learning workforce, including the teacher preparation process.



Defining Quality

How participants define quality and their perspectives on the state's quality rating and improvement system.



Proposed Changes

What participants suggested could be improved in early care and education in Florida.

Our Reach

234 PARENTS

159 EDUCATORS... ACROSS

22 FLORIDA COUNTIES



Let's Talk! Partners



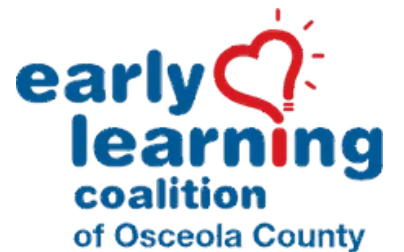
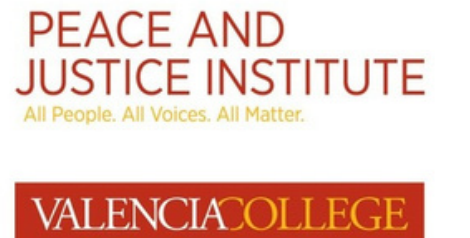
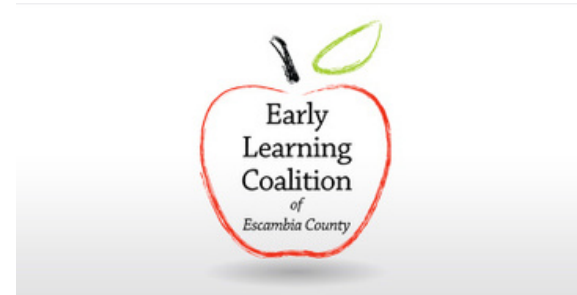
Early Learning Coalition of Northwest Florida



EPISCOPAL Children's Services



ESCAMBIA CHILDREN'S TRUST
Our Children. Our Community. Our Future.

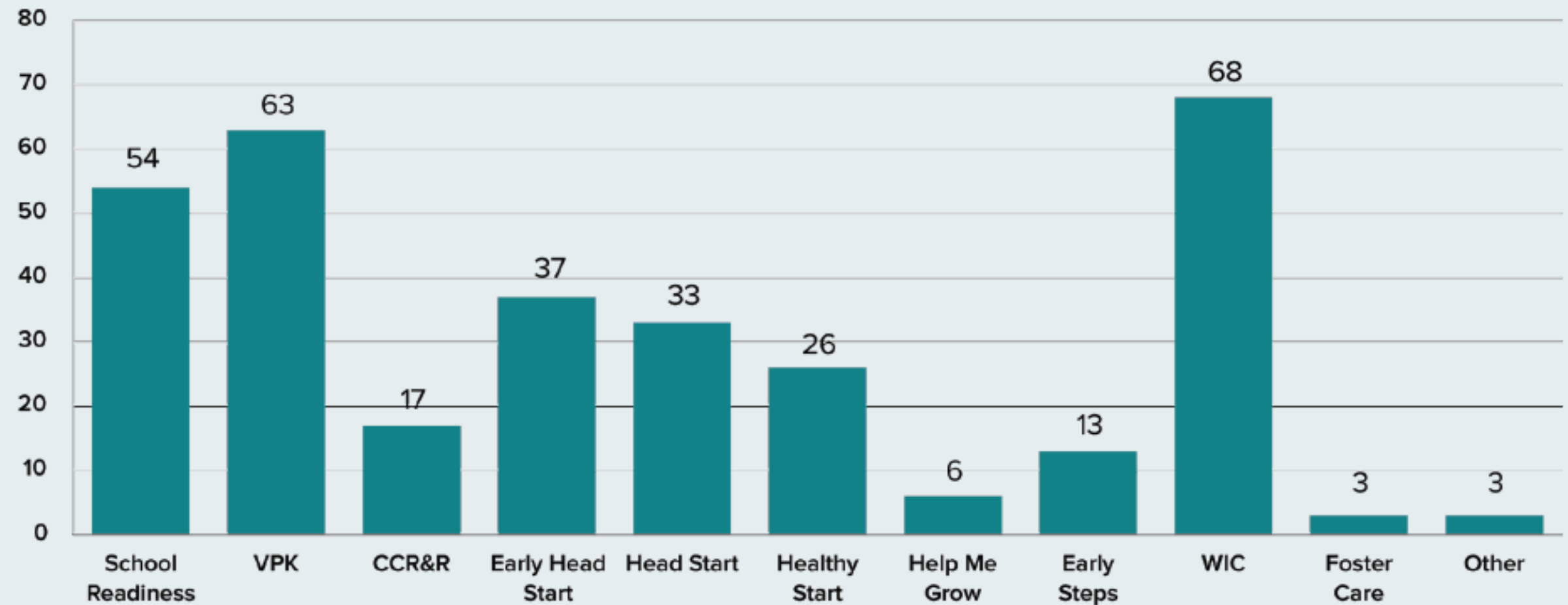


Parent Respondents

HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF PARENT SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Annual Household Income	% of Survey Respondents
Less than \$20,000	28%
\$20,000 - \$34,999	26%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	18%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	7%
\$75,000 and above	5%
Did Not Answer	16%

HAVE YOU USED ANY STATE FUNDED SERVICES FOR EARLY LEARNING?



Of parent survey respondents, 42% identified as Hispanic, 29% as Black, 16% as White, 8% as other, and less than 5% each as multiracial, Native Hawaiian or Asian.

Educator Respondents



Of the educators who completed the survey, 56% identified as Black, 22% as white, 10% as Hispanic, 8% as multiracial, and the remaining as Asian or other.



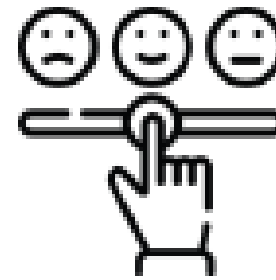
HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF EDUCATOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS	
Annual Household Income	% of Survey Respondents
Less than \$20,000	12%
\$20,000 - \$34,999	29%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	19%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	21%
\$75,000 and above	12%
Did Not Answer	7%

Key Themes



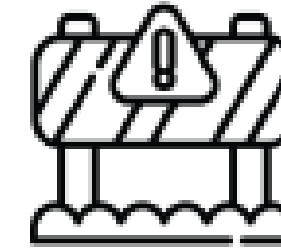
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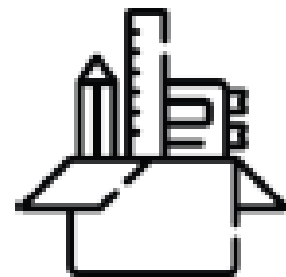
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Dreams and Aspirations

When asked what dreams they have for their children, parents responded with passion and enthusiasm. What parents talked about wanting for their children was consistent: happiness, health, good character, stability, financial security, access and opportunity, success, resilience, following their passions, and achieving their dreams. Three primary themes emerged across groups: education, economic success, and carving their own paths. A fourth theme emerged for some parents who are recent immigrants: citizenship.





My dream is that my daughters accomplish what I wasn't able to accomplish. I want them to have a professional career. If I support them, I'm sure they will accomplish it. With a strong support system and a united family, everything is possible."

–Indiantown parent

“I want her to be better than her mother.”


–Miami parent

“I want them to be able to follow their dreams. But at the same time, I want them to be able to get the opportunities.... You know because they're Black boys... I want things to be different for them. I want them to be able to be like. ‘Oh, I want to do this and I'm going to do it!’ I just want them to be happy and follow their dreams, like we all want for our kids. And I want to work hard to give them that.”

–Palm Beach parent

Satisfaction

When asked about what brings them the most joy about their current or previous early learning experience, parents reflected on their experiences with their children's early care and education, discussed the various advantages of their chose childcare arrangement, and considered the value the experiences brought to them and their children. Educators added things that they particularly enjoy about teaching in the early care and education sector.



Developmental Growth

- Parents and educators enjoy seeing their children thrive, grow, and learn.
- Many parents felt that their early care and education programs helped their children prepare academically, physically, and socially for kindergarten.
- Parents appreciate the socialization that their children received and the opportunities for their children to positively engage with other children. They spoke about the curriculum and instructional tools teachers used across age groups and developmental phases.
- Parents were pleased and often surprised by their children's advances in language and vocabulary. Meanwhile, educators talked about the magic of when a child grasps something for the first time.
- Parents also appreciated that their early learning programs helped establish routines, schedules, and consistency.
- Parents recognized that the structured environment of the early learning program made potty training their children seem easier than they thought it would be. They saw this as a real advantage of the early learning experience.

Developmental Growth

"Just seeing how colorful everything is and seeing their tiny little furniture and how they listen to you and how they want to do everything - that brought me joy. And just whenever they learn stuff and you see those little faces light up. It's amazing."

– Immokalee educator



Developmental Growth

“I like [when] that light bulb comes on. That's probably my favorite part. I'm so animated when they get the point. We're dancing. It's a full-blown pep rally. I'm the VPK teacher and it's like, look, you got to know this. So, I think that is probably the best part. I love when you teach a concept, or you introduce something, and they get it.”

– Jacksonville educator



But I liked it [the family childcare program]. I felt like it was kind of like staying at home with them... just not so much like you're following a schedule or a curriculum. It's more so like going on... their pace. And then also... as a baby, they didn't have him in diapers. They would take him to use the potty. I really thought that was cool.”

– Flagler parent

Developmental Growth

“My son started talking when he first started daycare. The first two weeks, they just thought he was a mute. He would say maybe two words, and that's it. Since he started, they've gotten him fully potty trained, which we battled for over a year for. He's started speaking now in full sentences. He's stuttering and has issues still with it, but he's started talking, and he's only three, but he was not talking before.”

– Lake County parent

Parent-Teacher Relationships

Parents and educators enjoy the positive relationships they build.

- Parents appreciated open and honest communication and the expertise that the educators bring to their jobs.
- Participants discussed various types of relationships as: (1) personal/familial, (2) professional/expert, or (3) supportive/connective.
- For many participants, the decision to place their children in the care of an early learning center was difficult. Finding a loving, trusting, and safe place was often challenging, but many parents found an early learning center that fit their needs and felt “like family” to them and their children. Knowing that their children were in a loving environment brought them joy.
- Educators also understand the importance of open and honest communication. In the listening sessions, educators discussed their role as child advocate and hoped that parents see them as a partner working on behalf of the children and families they serve.

Parent-Teacher Relationships

“I think the most positive thing that I enjoy about this learning center is the staff, the teachers. I really feel like they understand my daughter, because you always worry about that because you're the parent, but my daughter can have big emotions, and they know when she's off or when she's not acting like herself, and it really feels like they're almost like a family to her.”

– Lake County parent



My [favorite thing] is building a relationship with the families. I've built relationships where I still get invited to all their major achievements. Even from elementary to college and those who are now having kids, they're bringing their kids back to me [to] find out where I'm at [be]cause they want their kids to be in the same center around the people that they grew up learning from. So, it's those relationships that I enjoy most.”

– Jacksonville educator

Parent-Teacher Relationships

“And she was telling me, ‘This month you need to do this for your baby.’ She was telling me to put a light here so the baby can start moving, things like that for him to connect with me. And this social worker was also telling me, ‘You need to talk to your baby.’ Things like that. I didn't know. She told me that she cannot diagnose but she said that it looks like something called autism she said but I cannot diagnose it. You need to take him to the [clinic]. And she gave me the number and spoke to the neurologist and then diagnosed what's going on with him because I'm trying to do activities with him, like things he needs to do for his age and he's just not responding. And he was just sitting there. He was not eating on his own or at least playing with the food, things like that. And I thought maybe she's just not patient. That was my first thought. But I just decided I'm going to do what she's telling me. She's the expert. So, I took my son, and it was good to believe her because I think it was in the early stage of the spectrum.

– Key West parent

Barriers to Families

Let's Talk listening session participants identified many barriers associated with high quality early care and education in their communities.

These were focused in two areas: access and eligibility.



Access

- Two major themes emerged across sessions and stakeholder groups regarding access to quality early care and education: (1) availability and (2) affordability.
- Parents in many communities, regardless of whether they were urban, suburban, or rural, felt like there weren't options available to them, especially for infants. Educators echoed these concerns. When programs did have openings, they were often inaccessible due to price, geography, or other factors.
- Schedule (hours of operation) was a major barrier for many parents. More than just extended hours, some parents said they have jobs with shift work that required 24-hour childcare.
- As a result of these challenges, many parents said they just chose to keep their child at home or in the care of a family member, friend, or neighbor instead, despite their concerns about not having what they need to promote the early learning and development of their child.

Access



Many jobs start earlier than when the daycare opens. So, many people have to help moms to take the kids there at the time that they open. For example, I leave my house at 6 am for work and they open at 8 am.” – Arcadia parent

“Nobody can afford to have kids. Nobody.” – Orlando parent

“School is starting. I got to go back to work, and a lot of people are having issues finding [a spot]. Even if they're willing to pay, there are just not the spots. There's just not the spots.” – Tampa parent

Access

"Me and my husband, we didn't necessarily fight over it, but it did come down to where we had to make a decision [about] whether we were going to continue. My whole paycheck was going to paying the childcare. So, I was like, 'What am I doing?' There's no point in working here if I'm not personally seeing any of the money. So, I just decided that I was going to stay home with her, which really kind of put us tight with our budget."

– Lakeland parent

Eligibility

Numerous parents spoke of the eligibility structure for benefits as a complicating factor that perpetuated the inaccessibility and unaffordability of early care and education for them: Either they made too much money to qualify but still struggled, had difficulty accessing benefits, or lost benefits when they still needed them.

Several owner/directors also noted the need to change eligibility requirements.



Eligibility



Government help is lost when both parents work."


– Gainesville parent

"It was... heartbreaking. But I was really close with one of them [administrators] and she would say, 'Oh I already know this application for this family is going to get denied.' Or like, 'Oh, I wish this person wouldn't have put the other parent on the [application], because now [they don't qualify].' And it's like, you shouldn't have to do that. You shouldn't have to wish that a parent wouldn't have put the other parent on there. Now because they put dad on there and said dad is involved, which is a good thing, [they cannot access childcare subsidies]. That's what we're here for. That's what we're supposed to be fostering and nurturing. To have to say, 'Oh well, because dad is in the picture now, the income is not [eligible].' And then they can't afford childcare. There's too big of a gap where they're just needs aren't being met."

– Daytona Beach educator

The Early Learning Workforce

Listening session participants recognized that a strong, effective early learning workforce is essential for sustaining the community's early care and education sector. Owners/directors spoke with endearment about the dedication and passion of their educators. Whether experienced or novice educators, the owner/directors viewed their teachers as family and recognized the value they add to their organizations and especially to the children and their families.



Workforce Stability and Compensation

Parents, educators, and owners/directors alike recognized the critical role teachers play in ensuring a quality early learning experience for young children. They agreed that high teacher turnover and low teacher compensation are significant challenges that further complicate the challenges with access and affordability outlined above.

According to many participants, low wages and the lack of benefits keep many qualified teaching candidates away from the early care and education sector. Particularly with the shift toward additional accountability and emphasis on academic outcomes, owner/directors are finding that they compete against elementary schools for teachers. (And those schools can offer higher wages, a comprehensive benefits package, and more desirable working hours that early learning programs simply cannot because of their size and the nature of their funding.)

Workforce Stability and Compensation

Owners/directors also named delays in background checks as a barrier to hiring qualified staff. With the time to process the results of the background screening can be more than 30 days, the delays mean that potential new hires must wait for the results of the screening before they can begin teaching. To retain the new hire, owner/directors talked about having to either pay the new teacher while they wait and before they can begin teaching, pay them for tasks other than teaching, or hope that the new teacher will wait until the background screening results have been approved.

Workforce Stability and Compensation



It kills me when you have people that work in early childhood education, and then have to go apply for benefits and be on the system. That makes no sense to me that someone who has such an important and vital job has to sit there and worry about whether or not they can pay their bills or they can feed their own [family].”

– Jacksonville educator

“I will say, the one thing that sucks is all of us parents are sitting here who have our kids here, we all say our kids love their teachers. My son, my oldest, lost three teachers in his first year being there, and they were his favorite teachers. My youngest just lost his... Well, our youngest just lost their two-year-old teacher because she texted me, and she went and found a better job, paying more.”

– Lake County parent

Workforce Stability and Compensation

"We have lots of centers that have closed their doors and primarily it's because they don't have a teacher." – Tampa owner/director



I feel like that's where it brings it back to the wages, to the pay. Bonuses and supplementals are great, but that is not going to allow any teacher or director to change their way of living... And that's what we need to wrap our head around." – Tampa owner/director

Workforce Stability and Compensation

"Right now, we're in a hiring crisis. It's hard to find staff. So, when you find somebody and you interview them, they are qualified. And then, per regulation, you have to have the background clearance first. At this point, that's the automatic two to three weeks. This person has a family. So now you either have to let them go and tell them to sit home and wait three weeks without any pay or you retain them as staff and pay them to do something that they can do... within the ramifications of DCF until it comes back. So, now you're paying pretty much an invisible person just to retain them for three weeks. That's coming out of your budget."

– Tallahassee owner/director

Program Requirements

Providers from all sessions talked about the rigorous and time-consuming requirements of programs such as voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) and School Readiness. They recognize the burdens and stress these requirements and regulations place on their teachers and on the administrators—even the owner/directors themselves.

Although many see great value in such programs for children, they expressed concerns that the requirements are so prohibitive that many choose not to participate



Program Requirements

"The expectations that are put on – like you were saying – here's another thing. Ugh, well, what are we taking away? You're adding something, but what are you taking away? We burn out. People get burnt out." – Educator



The requirements and qualifications that are placed upon people are unrealistic.” – Pensacola owner/director

“So, for an example, I'm going to, VPK, since we all know about the 15-hour emergent literacy. There's additional classes and stuff now that you want educators to take, and that's also including like the Duval County School Board teachers who actually are already certified teachers, or actually already have bachelor's and master's degrees. Just because they're placed in these VPK classrooms, they still have to go back and have that additional 15-hour emerging literacy component. There's no compensation for that. And yes, we're rewarded emotionally from what the children give us, but it doesn't pay our bills.” – Jacksonville educator

Program Requirements

“We have 90% in School Readiness.... I would say it’s not just the paperwork, but the requirements that they’re putting on the teachers now. They just don’t want to do it. They don’t want to go through the training that’s required. They don’t want to go through having to sit through when they come in and do the observations, the assessments. It’s one thing to tell a teacher that she’s not doing a great job and not help her.... And it’s really hard to get them [as teachers] to commit to taking all the courses because you are already coming to work all day long, and now you want them to come on the weekends and sit four or five hours in the class.”

– Pensacola owner/director

Program Requirements

“I’ve had some people come fresh out of college being trained by the 65-year-old lady that’s been in this for 25 years [without a college degree]. And she works circles around them in understanding the children, in understanding the parents, in understanding how daycare flows. Whereas when you’re at a classroom and you got that book in front of you, that’s not real life. Real life is completely different.”

– Tampa owner/director

)

Workforce Commitment and Quality



Numerous parents, educators, and owners/directors talked about the connection between a trained, well-compensated, and stable teaching workforce and quality. Educators expressed concerns about the lack of understanding of the commitment required for quality. Several parents expressed concern about early care and education businesses that seemed to be more interested in profit than ensuring quality.

Workforce Commitment and Quality

“If the teachers are coming to work every day and loving their job.... If teachers aren’t being invested in, then your children are not getting enough from the people they see every single day. And your child deserves to see a teacher that’s happy and wants to be there with them. Every day.” – Lake County parent

**“And with the [teacher] turnover, then you have a lack of trust.”
– Lakeland parent**

“We have lots of people that come into the center, and they think we’re just watching kids. No, you’re not. You are not just watching these kids. You are being paid to teach them, to show them what it’s like to live in the world, so they can go on and succeed.” – Bay County educator

“Then you have some of them [childcare businesses] that’s really there for the paycheck. But when you find a good one, you hold onto it. You hold on tight, and you don’t let go and you praise those teachers too.” – Jacksonville parent

Teacher Preparation

When asked about how they would transform the preparation of early educators in Florida, educators reflected on their own preparation programs and how well-prepared (or not) they felt when they started teaching.

- Most educators agreed that 45 hours of training alone was not enough to prepare them for the classroom.
- Most educators felt that spending time in the classroom shadowing teachers, student teaching, or working with a teacher mentor would have been extremely valuable.
- Some educators expressed a need for more training to engage parents in identifying and addressing developmental concerns.

Teacher Preparation

“When you go to college and you get your degree, you're learning. Everything's in the book. You learn all these strategies and you learn about different disabilities, and classroom management skills and everything that you're going to do on your first day when you get your classroom, that first classroom. And so, you have a plan in place but not until you step foot in that door is [it] that you realize... it takes creativity, it takes a lot of thinking outside the box. So, we may have that education but once [you're in the classroom], you have to be hands-on. So, you have the background knowledge, but I think it's different once you step foot in the door. Once you get the day-to-day routine and you have everything in place, then your strategies come in, everything that you've learned.”

– Miami educator

Teacher Preparation

“Before I was able to get my CDA, we had our first and second period where we could go out and see real classrooms and be in there for an hour or two. That really helped me see it in real life before I had to do the paper stuff. So that really helped me.”

– Pensacola educator



It would be beneficial if they could do an on-the-job training in addition to those 40 hours.”

– Pinellas educator

“[New teachers] should be chaperoned for a certain amount of hours. Even if it's 45 hours, somebody needs to be with them so that they know, ‘Yes, have a checklist. Yes, they can do that. They're capable of doing that. They're doing good,’ because just throwing somebody in there is not good.” – Bay County educator

Teacher Preparation

“That would be a really good training to offer to educators – like a sensitivity training on how to break that news [about a developmental delay] to parents. Because that’s always one of the most anxious-ridden I felt in my life when I have to sit in front of the parent and be like, ‘Hey, something might be a little bit not quite right here.’”

– Pensacola educator

Defining Quality

When asked about how to define quality in early learning settings, educators and owners/directors alike acknowledged their familiarity with the state's indicators for quality and the need for accountability. They expressed concern about the emphasis placed on assessments, the lack of adequate support for teachers, and the lack of quality indicators that are seen as important but difficult to quantify or measure.

Owners and directors also voiced concern about the high stakes associated with Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) evaluations and the impact the scores have on their programs.

Parents, meanwhile, talked about how they define quality, which often differs from these measures.

Assessments to Measure Quality

During the listening sessions, many participants discussed the merits of CLASS: an observational tool to assess teaching and instructional quality by linking teacher behaviors to student learning. Although they acknowledged the rationale for using an assessment tool, few believed it truly measured teaching quality. Most providers were quick to point out what they saw as its flaws, particularly noting the stress it places on students and teachers. Others questioned its accuracy to measure the quality of teaching without considering the influence of external factors

Assessments to Measure Quality

“Yeah, because we had a staff meeting and the director said to us, ‘This year, I want to see y'all not playing with the children no more. You need to teach them.’ And I'm like, ‘That's how they learn, through play.’ And I'm an infant toddler teacher. I work from zero to two.”
– Daytona educator



I think our problem really goes back to the children. We're not making them our priority any longer. Honestly, [we] are not and that is what's sad. They're no longer the priority.” – Daytona educator

“I tell my staff, ‘Quality comes in when you're doing what you love,’ and that goes the same for the kids as well. When kids are doing fun things that they like to do, and that's why VPK. I said, ‘It's social and emotional skills that we need to teach them.’ When they're doing things that they really like hands on, and you are loving what you're doing, that's where quality comes in.” – Pensacola owner/provider

Assessments to Measure Quality



What I've noticed is that there's been more changes within the laws... on implementation of what they expect to see in the classroom and it's benefiting the children. But there's not really much being given to the teachers that is actually supporting them.” – Jacksonville educator

**“We spend so much time assessing and worrying about the assessment. We need more training in this. Sometimes I feel like that's all I am doing [are assessments].”
– Pensacola educator**

Assessments to Measure Quality



It's the low ratios. It's the interaction. The CLASS assessment, I think is one of the best things that has happened to early childhood. Yes. By far, but yeah, you're right. It's that interaction. It's those relationships. There're so many things.”

– Tampa owner/director

“They want to assess the children quarterly. You don't have time to be assessing a child every day, every other day, especially if you are in a VPK class and you have 11 children, and then you have another teacher that's in there, because now it's 22 kids. So, you have to have two [teachers]. You need those four eyes plus some more to be monitoring those kids at all times. For someone to have to go and be assessing now, assessing there, and assessing here, and then not only that, but you also have the children that's on School Readiness, so you're already assessing for VPK, and now you have to do the ages and stages for this one [or] that one. Where do you have the time? That's a lot of stress on the teachers.”

– Educator

Assessments to Measure Quality

Educators and owners/directors talked about how teachers and early learning programs are held accountable in the state's accountability system, but parent's aren't.



Another thing that we come across are parents that just think it's our problem. They don't really want to work with us, and they're not interested. Well, oh yeah, his behaviors, that's what daycare is for.” – Immokalee educator

“Since the parents are using state-funded money to send their kids to VPK, you should require all the parents to come to a monthly parenting class to earn that state money, essentially.” – Pensacola educator

Parent Perceptions of Quality

Listening session participants talked about other aspects of what they considered to be quality in early care and education programs. Participants in all sessions recognized that there are many dimensions to quality early care and education.

- Many parents defined quality as a focus on early learning, engaging activities, positive settings, a place their child liked going, referrals from people they trust, and educators and owners/directors they trust.
- Owners and directors look for quality in ways that can't necessarily be measured, such as in interactions and relationships, in the passion of the teachers, and in the love that they show to their children. They also considered teacher-to-students ratios, safety, and facilities when referring to quality.

Parent Perceptions of Quality

“They teach them stuff here [like] how to do letters. She’s three. She’s starting to do letters in the daycare. I’m very appreciative of them. [My daughter] always says, ‘I want to go to daycare.’ So, if your child is happy to go somewhere, it’s ok.... If they’re scared [to go], that means something is wrong.” – Palm Beach parent



From the moment you enter [the early care and education center], everyone knows you. It’s something small, united. I like it a lot. The second thing, the classrooms contain all the educational materials and I really care about that. My child is more advanced than the standard, which is why I was so interested in finding a place like this one. I’ve found it. I don’t live nearby. I live in North Miami Beach, but I don’t care how far it is.” – Miami parent

“[I want] a home away from home. A family dynamic of someone that you can trust, and you can count on them to be there for you, not just your kid, but just to be there for your family, that they’re there to help you in any way they can.” – Lakeland parent

Parent Perceptions of Quality



“I think the classroom setting, too, is really nice to have, just because it’s bright. It’s colorful. There is music. There are all kinds of activities, stuff we don’t particularly have at home [like the] music machine. I have a bubble machine now, but I’m saying, all of the activities, the painting, everything.” – Tampa parent.

“As a parent, I will say I am more attracted to a center if it has the word ‘preschool’ in it. If it says ‘daycare’ or ‘childcare,’ I am not as drawn to those as I would be a preschool. [If] the word ‘school’ is in it, I’m thinking you’re going to be teaching my kid... because it is early learning.” – Lakeland parent

Proposed Changes

Parents, educators, owners, and directors identified a variety of services and supports that could improve early learning outcomes and quality of life for families.

Repeated themes were around parent connections to resources and treating teachers as professionals.



Parent Connections to Resources

Parents talked about needing:

- more information and connections to resources
- access to mental health services
- more multi-lingual support
- extended hours of public spaces (like the library) to accommodate varied schedules
- more flexible workplaces.

Parents appreciated the opportunity to participate in the listening sessions, talk with other parents, to share their experiences, and learn from one another.

Parent Connections to Resources



“I’m surprised about the lack of support for people who don’t have strong English. There are no resources.... The work that is being given to bilingual people does not meet their standards. I know the teacher salaries are terrible. There aren’t enough prepared personnel to do this job.” – Jacksonville parent

“Prioritizing these mental health discussions, which I think the world is starting to get to a better place with. But there are still so many people that just push it down like, ‘Oh. Seeing a therapist, that’s a bad thing. That’s something wrong with me.’” – Mariana parent

**“A group like this once a week for all the parents that feel depressed or stressed – somewhere to go. Some things you are going through you don't have to tell your mom or your man. Yeah, a support group.”
– Palm Beach parent**

Parent Connections to Resources

"Ideally, I would like to see the state fund an early education program for all children, because I don't feel like just because my mom and dad can't afford the high-end daycare, that kids have to go to...worse daycares."

– Lake County parent



Why does the state of Florida not provide daycare while looking for jobs? Why can we not go to the job and get something from the manager, or the GM saying, ‘Oh, they were here for an hour?’ In New York, they do that. They pay for childcare, for, I think it's like 15 weeks.”

– Tampa parent

Parent Connections to Resources

"In my dream world, I would know more about more things and more things to look for myself in my kid, or know where to go if I needed resources."

– Mariana parent



There should be more resources for the fathers, so they feel like they're just as important. I know that...a strong male presence makes a humongous difference."

– Lakeland parent

"I think what we need [is] more access to resources in rural communities. I live in a rural area, and it might be cheaper, but there's no resources."

– Alachua parent

Treating Teachers as Professionals

Educators and owner/directors identified several key changes they believe would improve the field. A major theme revolved around treating teachers like professionals. This included providing better compensation for teachers, giving greater respect for their work, lowering teacher to child ratios, and providing more teacher training, parent involvement, and responsive curricula.



Treating Teachers as Professionals



I'm not treated like an educator or paid like an educator. So why am I even under the DOE? It's pointless. We should be paid by the state. We should get benefits – all from the state. We should be considered teachers. I should be able to walk into Target and buy my little supplies on sale [like the other teachers can]."

– Pensacola educator

"Even if you are a VPK teacher in the school system, you are legally not considered a teacher in the state of Florida."

– Lakeland parent

Treating Teachers as Professionals

“I would like to see policies and procedures that are implemented for early childhood being realistic, not something that somebody sat in an office and thought, ‘You know, the best-case scenario, I think this is how we should admit it.’ Obviously, you have never been in a pre-K classroom. Otherwise, you would know what you're wanting us to do, and what is realistically going to happen are night and day.”

– Pensacola owner/director



I would give anything for those people that are sitting and making these rules and these guidelines and regulations to just work in an infant room or toddler room, not just for five minutes, but you get a week with the infants and a week with the toddlers, all the way. Then you come back to the table, and you tell me those guidelines, those rules, those regulations, whatever you done put together, you tell me then, do you have time to do all of this?”

– Educator

Treating Teachers as Professionals



I would also like to work alongside someone to examine the mental health aspect of childcare and efforts to decrease the workload for the teachers to maintain their sanity as they go through this profession. So, finding a way to restructure the schedule to give them a mental health break.”

– Tallahassee owner/director

“For the state, you just have to have a pulse and not have killed anybody. Seriously, then they’ll put you in a classroom. But that’s for the younger group. When you get to kindergarten where it really matters – according to the rest of the world – then you have to have all of these credentials and the degrees and the whole nine. But, if we know that birth through age five is most important [developmentally], why is it that it’s the least amount of energy and effort put into this? I don’t understand that part.”

– Tallahassee owner/director

Treating Teachers as Professionals

"We should have a big ad campaign about how great our field is. I would like to see that we are a profession and I'd like for people to know how great we are. And I think that needs to be advertised."

– Tampa owner/director



[We have] got to solve this pay equity issue. Regardless of what else we do, as they have done with nursing, as they have done with some other segments of the industry, we have got to find a way to resolve this pay issue."

– Tampa owner/director

"The pay needs changes but also the foundation needs to go back to what it originally was intended for, which was focusing on the children. Letting the children's best interests as our prime motivator, prime goal. Letting kids be kids, letting them play, letting them explore, and the rest will follow."

– Daytona educator

Treating Teachers as Professionals

...You've got to do something about being decided for us to be babysitters, because that's not what we are. We're teachers. Because I cannot tell you how many times that, just being a man in this field, I get asked when am I going to find a real job? Because "That's women's work."

- Daytona Educator

Thank you and next steps...



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