Learning Together:

A Study of Six B.A. Completion
Cohort Programs in Early Care
and Education

Year I Report

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Executive Summary

Demand is rising for bachelor's degree programs in the field of early care and education (ECE), prompted by a host of recent policy changes, including new requirements for B.A.-level teachers in Head Start programs, and, in a growing number of states and California counties, publicly funded preschool programs. California's statewide CARES program (Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards), which offers stipends to early childhood educators for pursuing formal education, has also dramatically raised the demand for lower- and upper-division study in ECE. Finally, interest in expanding access to higher education has been driven by concerns about ethnic and linguistic stratification within the early childhood workforce, and building a pipeline for diversifying the ECE field's leadership.

"Cohort" B.A. completion programs, which target small groups of adults working in ECE to pursue a course of study together and receive a variety of support services, including classes scheduled at convenient times and locations, have emerged in Alameda, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Santa Clara Counties. Six cohort programs are now operating in these counties, at Antioch University, California State University-East Bay, Mills College, San Francisco State University, San Jose State University, and the University of La Verne.

To demonstrate the outcomes of these efforts, and to inform further policy and program development, the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) has launched a five-year study of all six student cohorts, as well as periodic examinations of institutional change at selected colleges and universities. This report presents Year 1 findings of the "Learning Together" study, in which the research team conducted extensive interviews with over 90 percent of the 124 student cohort members, and with 13 administrators and faculty members from three of the six institutions of higher education.

The students in the study demonstrated a strong commitment to the early care and education field, having worked continuously in center- or home-based settings for an average of about 16 years. Most were among the first generation in their families to attend college, and about 40 percent had made previous attempts to complete a four-year degree. Most study participants were Latino or other people of color, and nearly one-half identified their primary language spoken at home as being other than English—most often Spanish. The institutional representatives included one university president, one associate dean, one admissions officer, three department and/or program chairs, five faculty members (two of whom were also program coordinators), and two program coordinators whose responsibilities extended beyond this cohort program.

From both groups of interview subjects, the study team heard a resoundingly positive message about the success of these programs to date. There was also a striking congruence between the student and institutional perspectives on aspects of these programs that were working well, and on the adjustments or improvements that were still needed:

- *The cohort experience:* Both the students and the institutional representatives recognized that the group experience facilitated the creation of learning communities and provided sources of social-emotional and academic support, and opportunities for reflection about teaching practice.

- *Financial support:* Scholarships and other forms of aid were critical to these students' participation, and, in some cases, students felt a need for even more support, whether from their colleges or universities or from their employers. Likewise, outside support from county First 5 organizations and others had been decisive in allowing the institutions to develop these cohort programs. In fact, representatives from all three institutions that we studied expressed serious doubts that the cohort efforts could remain viable over the long term, or attract sufficient numbers of students, without ongoing outside support, despite their impressive success thus far.

- *Advising and counseling:* Both groups recognized the need for and value of targeted assistance on such issues as articulation with community college programs, transcript review, and educational and career planning.

- *Skill-based support:* Cohort members at all six institutions, as well as the administration and faculty representatives we interviewed, cited academic writing as students' strongest area of need for additional assistance, followed by technology-related skills. Both groups agreed that students were often not receiving as much formal assistance as they needed. Students in the San Francisco State University cohort, a unique dual-language (Spanish-English) program, strongly affirmed the value and success of this model, but over one-half felt a need for additional assistance related to taking classes in two languages.

- *Access-based support:* Flexibility in the scheduling and location of classes was critical to these students, and institutions were willing to make such accommodations, particularly with the help of outside funds. When cohorts met off-campus, however, students generally found it much more difficult to access the academic and technological tutoring and support services that institutions provided.

In addition to confirming previous research findings about higher education cohort programs for "nontraditional" students, this study also identified important issues to consider in future planning of such programs in the ECE field, and in further investigations of this particular student population. Students reported that support and encouragement from family members were critical to their ability to juggle the demands of family, work and school—an important advising and counseling issue for institutions to consider when assessing students' readiness to succeed in B.A. completion programs. We also learned that students need support, flexibility, and buy-in from their ECE employers; cohort program administrators can broker these relationships by involving center directors and administrators in program design and implementation. Arranging field placements or practicum experiences is challenging when students work full-time, and the cooperation of employers is critical to their success.

Three major policy issues have also come to the fore in this first year of the study:

- *Financing.* Demand for B.A. completion cohort programs in ECE comes hand in hand with an ongoing financing crisis in higher education. Colleges and universities, whether public or private, recognize clearly that they cannot build or expand new program initiatives without significant ongoing resources, and ECE programs in higher education are especially challenged and under-funded. Likewise, most working students in the ECE field need substantial financial assistance in order to participate. Fortunately, there are successful models of public financing of higher education for targeted professions that are worthy of replication and expansion. In the field of early care and education, New Jersey's publicly funded Abbott Preschool Program included a statewide higher education initiative that successfully helped current and incoming teachers meet a new B.A. requirement, leading to preschool jobs at the same compensation levels as K-12 teaching (Whitebook, Ryan, Kipnis, & Sakai, 2008). Federal workforce development initiatives, including incentives to create and support higher education programs for specific job sectors, have also been implemented in special education (U.S. Department of Education, 2000), medicine (Grumbach, Hart, Mertz, Coffman, & Palazzo, 2003), and other fields.

- *Compensation.* Demand for B.A. completion cohort programs is largely driven by rising educational requirements for early childhood teachers and other staff positions. Without increased funding to improve compensation in the ECE field, however, it remains in doubt whether substantial numbers of students who complete B.A. degrees, and who want to remain in teaching or other roles in the field, will actually do so. Improving compensation, in order to encourage the retention of well-educated students in the field, will require a significant infusion of federal and state dollars.

- *Beyond the B.A.* Four-fifths of the students in this study expressed an eagerness not only to complete a B.A., but also to continue their education further to the M.A. or even Ph.D. level. In this light, higher education efforts such as B.A. completion cohort programs— and by implication, new opportunities for post-baccalaureate education— should be institutionalized in order to serve as an ongoing leadership pipeline for the ECE field.

This first phase of a multi-year investigation of B.A. completion cohort programs indicates the significant potential of such programs to contribute well-trained teachers and leaders to the early care and education profession. These six programs under study could well become models not only for the ECE field in California and other states, but also for other fields, helping diverse groups of working adults to gain access to and succeed in higher education.

Future years of the study will examine such questions as the content of high-quality B.A.-level teacher preparation in early care and education; effective partnerships between institutions of higher education and employers in creating fieldwork opportunities for ECE students; student retention and graduation rates in these B.A. completion cohort programs; and the career trajectories of these cohort participants.

Introduction

The Learning Together longitudinal study focuses on four counties' efforts to expand bachelor's degree opportunities in early care and education (ECE) for working adults. The student cohort model—in which small groups of ECE students with similar interests and characteristics pursue a bachelor's degree together, and receive targeted support services—has emerged in Alameda, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Santa Clara Counties, with programs at Antioch University, California State University-East Bay, Mills College, San Francisco State University, San Jose State University, and the University of La Verne. With county, First 5, and private foundation support, these six cohort efforts have been developed with similar goals

1. To increase and retain a pool of B.A.-level professionals in the ECE field with culturally, linguistically, and professionally diverse backgrounds;

2. To invest in institutional change at colleges and universities in order to expand their capacity to provide appropriate and accessible B.A. programs for ECE practitioners; and

3. To assure that degree recipients are able to demonstrate and articulate professional competencies that are appropriate to the degree obtained.

In order to demonstrate the outcomes of these efforts, and to inform policy decisions and further program development, solid evaluative data are essential. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) has launched a five-year longitudinal study of all six student cohorts, as well as periodic examinations of institutional change at selected institutions of higher education. There are several reasons for a multi-county focus to the evaluation: leaders in all four counties have posed similar questions about the effectiveness of these models; a multi-county study allows for a larger, more robust sample; and a multi-county study allows us to compare different program designs and models with each other. This report presents Year 1 findings of the Learning Together study.

Study Rationale

Most students attending California's college and university programs with an early childhood focus are working full-time, typically at low-wage ECE jobs. Many speak a language other than or in addition to English, and many face significant challenges in pursuing college-level work in English (Whitebook, Bellm, Lee & Sakai, 2005). These characteristics earn them the label of "nontraditional" students, who are generally defined as having four or more of the following characteristics: delayed postsecondary enrollment beyond the year of high school completion; part-time attendance for at least part of the academic year; full-time employment while attending school; financial independence as defined by eligibility criteria for financial aid; responsibility for dependents; single parenthood; and lack of a high school diploma (vs. a GED, other certificate, or no formal completion). Many are among the first generation of their families to attend college. The prevalence of "nontraditional" students in higher education today, however, makes the terms "nontraditional" and "traditional" somewhat outdated.[1]

Combining school, work and family responsibilities make accessing and completing degree programs more challenging for students such as those examined for this report. Working adults, first-generation students, and low-income students are also more likely than traditional students to leave college without completing a degree (Chen, 2005; Choy, 2002). Job responsibilities reduce the flexibility of students' schedules, limiting the number and variety of classes they can take. First-generation students may also have a limited understanding of financial aid, admissions processes, and how to develop educational plans and career goals, perhaps, in part, because family members are less able to act as role models or sources of information (Tym, McMillion, Barone, & Webster, 2004). A census of California's college and university ECE teacher preparation programs (Whitebook et al., 2005) found that the major challenges for

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[1] In the 1999-2000 academic year, for example, an extraordinary 73 percent of all U.S. college and university undergraduates were in some way "nontraditional," and about 43 percent were more than 24 years old (Dukakis, Bellm, Seer, & Lee, 2007).

these students included competing work or family responsibilities; a lack of academic preparation; insufficient funds for financial aid; and a rising need for courses and supports in languages other than English.

Five categories of student support offered by institutions of higher education show particular promise in lowering attrition and increasing success among working adult students such as those participating in this study (Dukakis et al., 2007). These are: 1) targeted delivery of services, such as student cohorts; 2) academic advising and counseling; 3) financial support; 4) skill-based support, such as tutoring or computer training; and 5) access-based support, such as classes or services at nontraditional hours or in more accessible locations, as well as online or distance learning. The institutions of higher education examined in this study provided support in each of these five areas.

Although B.A. completion programs for working adults have become widespread in the United States, only recently have they been designed to meet the particular needs of educators of young children prior to kindergarten. In addition to the six programs included in this study, others are now operating or being developed in various parts of California, including the Central Valley and Los Angeles County (Dukakis, Bellm, Seer & Lee, 2007).

For more than two decades, California law has not required a bachelor's degree or certification in early childhood education in the ECE field, and consequently there has been no mandate for institutions of higher education with B.A. programs to offer early childhood majors, minors or specializations (Bellm, Whitebook, Cohen & Stevenson, 2004). While some four-year colleges and universities in the state do offer such programs, they are housed in a variety of departments with different missions.

But many factors have driven the rising demand for such B.A. programs. The 2006 statewide Preschool For All ballot initiative (Proposition 82), which would have required a B.A. for teachers in publicly funded preschool settings, spurred efforts to expand the limited upper-division opportunities for current or potential teachers seeking to complete a four-year degree focused on early childhood education (Whitebook et al., 2005). Although the defeat of Proposition 82 postponed such a statewide B.A. requirement, many other states now require B.A. degrees for teachers in publicly funded preschools (Barnett et al.,

2008), and several California counties have adopted this B.A. requirement in their publicly funded preschools and/or offered stipends or other support to early childhood educators for earning college degrees. In addition, the recent reauthorization of the federal Head Start program set a requirement for 50 percent of teachers and all education coordinators to earn a four-year degree and to complete specialized training in early childhood education by 2013 (U.S. Congress, 2007). The new Head Start requirements have particularly reinvigorated concern about how to expand higher education opportunities so that current members of the workforce can earn four-year degrees.

Further, since 1999, the statewide CARES program (Comprehensive Approaches to Raising Educational Standards) has offered stipends and other resources to early childhood educators for pursuing formal education. This widespread effort, operating in nearly every California county, has dramatically raised the demand for lower- and upper-division study in the ECE field, and has supported many participants in seeking college degrees, including a large number of the students in the B.A. completion programs described in this study.

Finally, interest in expanded four-year degree options for working adults in the ECE field is driven by concerns about maintaining and even increasing the diversity of the early childhood workforce, which more closely resembles the children of California with respect to ethnicity and language than do teachers in Grades K-12 (Whitebook et al., 2006a and 2006b). To ensure that raising qualifications does not displace experienced and dedicated members of the ECE workforce, or decrease diversity, many counties are engaged in creative efforts to support college access and degree completion among women of color, many of whom are of the first generation in their family to pursue higher education, and many of whom speak English as a second language. Such efforts are also intended to build a pipeline for diversifying leadership in the field (Calderon, 2006; Dukakis et al., 2007).

Yet this call to expand higher education opportunities for the current ECE workforce, particularly at the bachelor's degree level, comes at a time when higher education as a whole faces a fiscal crisis. College attendance has surged in the last decade with rapid population growth, the influx of the children of the large baby-boomer generation, and increased requirements for college degrees or coursework in a wide variety of service and technical jobs (California Post Secondary

Education Commission, 2000). At the same time, rising costs and insufficient increases in public financing have led to sharp increases in tuition, making access to higher education more difficult, particularly for low-income, nontraditional college students (Rand Corporation, 2000; National Education Association, 2003).

College attendance has indeed become less affordable for many students. Between 2002-03 and 2006-07, resident tuition for California undergraduates increased by 70 percent at the University of California, and by 76 percent at California State University. California community college fees doubled from five to eleven dollars per unit between 1990 and 2002-03, and again by 2008 to their current level of twenty dollars per unit (Schevitz, Fagan & Yi, 2008). Private college tuition has likewise risen dramatically. Between 2006-07 and 2007-08 alone, tuition increased by an average of 6.2 percent at private for-profit colleges, and 6.3 percent at private nonprofit institutions, with an average of $23,712 per year for tuition and fees at the latter (College Board, 2007).

Although many students receive financial aid to assist with these costs, federal loans and grants are not keeping pace with inflation, according to the College Board, and not surprisingly, student borrowing from private sources increased by 12 percent in adjusted-inflation dollars from 2006 to 2007. Yet the recent crisis among lending institutions has limited students' options for borrowing; in April 2008, the largest guarantor of private education loans filed for bankruptcy (Winstein, 2008). Congress is now seeking remedies to address the tightening financial aid market. Some institutions, notably Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Stanford and other elite universities with large endowments, have created progressive financing schemes to increase the participation of low-income students by eliminating or reducing tuition dramatically, and to provide tuition reductions to middle- and upper-middle-class families (Leonhardt, 2008). Such remedies are not available in less well-endowed institutions, however, nor are they generally available to the working adult population that is the focus of this report.

The California public appears to be well aware of the financial crisis in higher education and how it impacts college opportunity. In a poll conducted in October 2007, 56 percent of Californians expressed the belief that getting a college education was more difficult than it had been 10 years before. Sixty-five percent felt that many residents who were qualified did not have the opportunity to attend college. When asked whether the vast majority of people who were qualified to go to college had the opportunity to do so, 42 percent of Asian Americans and 40 percent of Whites said yes, while 82 percent of Latinos and 75 percent of African Americans said no (Public Policy Institute of California, 2007).

For working adults, questions of access go beyond issues of cost, although cost remains a critical concern. Programs must also be accessible in terms of location, schedule, and academic and technological assistance. In a climate of financial crisis, public institutions that face a student demand beyond their capacity have little incentive to create targeted programs, and are unlikely to do so in the absence of generous funding to cover costs. Private institutions, by contrast, are continually seeking new students, and thus have greater incentive to create programs to draw particular populations—but without outside sources of funding, the challenges of affording private tuition are largely insurmountable for low-paid working adults.

Part I of our study findings highlights the experience of the students in these B.A. completion cohort programs. Part II highlights three of the six institutions of higher education, each of which represents a different legal auspice (public, private for-profit, and private nonprofit) as well as distinct funding mechanisms. While all are operating in the current context of a higher education financial crisis, the particular impacts and constraints on the institutions vary. Our findings are intended to benefit the institutions themselves, and to inform representatives of other colleges and universities, as well as policy makers, funders and advocates, who are exploring how to make B.A. degree programs available to working adults in ECE and allied fields. The report also identifies areas for future research.

Study Design: Students

Survey Universe and Survey Sample

Fall 2007, the First 5 agencies of San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Alameda Counties, and the E3 Institute in Santa Clara County, provided our research team with contact information for the survey universe: the 124 students participating in their B.A. cohort completion programs. For the first student interview, conducted in Fall 2007, the research team attempted to reach all students in the survey universe. The survey sample for the second student interview,

conducted in Winter 2008, included the 114 students who had participated in the Fall 2007 interview.

Data Collection

The Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of California at Berkeley approved the survey instruments and data collection procedures for this study. We implemented a three-fold data collection process: 1) compiling the contact, demographic, educational, and employment data that each program had collected on the participating students; 2) interviewing the study participants by telephone in October and November 2007 in order to update their contact and employment information, learn more about their experiences to date in their academic programs, and begin establishing a relationship with each student; and 3) conducting a more in-depth telephone interview with the students between January and March 2008, focusing on personal and institutional challenges and barriers, progress and benchmarks through the higher education process, and course work and professional preparation. The "Data Overview" section below describes the data in more detail.

We began the data collection process in Fall 2007 by collecting a file of student contact, demographic, educational and employment data from the First 5 agencies of San Francisco, Santa Barbara, and Alameda Counties, and from the E3 Institute in Santa Clara County. We then sent a letter to all the students describing the study, encouraging their participation in two telephone interviews, and informing them about their rights as research subjects. In addition, because the majority of the students were working full-time and attending classes in the evening and on weekends, we asked them to complete a form describing the best days of the week and times of the day to reach them by telephone. Our research team was available to conduct the interviews during daytime, evening, and weekend hours.

Between October and November 2007 we contacted the students by telephone to conduct the initial interview. We either conducted the interview at the time of the first call, or scheduled it at a time more convenient for the student. We made eight attempts to interview each student. Because of response rate issues, we continued to conduct these interviews with the San Francisco State University students through March 2008, sometimes in-person. The Fall 2007 interviews lasted an average of 12 minutes, and at their conclusion, we asked students to schedule a time to participate in a longer, 30-minute interview in Winter 2008.

Between January and March 2008, we contacted all students who had been interviewed in Fall 2007 to participate in a second interview. Again, we either interviewed them at the time of the first call, or scheduled a more convenient time, and made up to eight attempts to interview each student. At the beginning of each of

Table 1: Fall 2007 Survey Response Rates

	Survey Universe	Left Program	Eligible for Interview	Respondent Not Available	Refused	Completed	Response Rate
Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	14	0	14	2	0	12	86%
Alameda County: Mills College	6	0	6	0	0	6	100%
San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	33	0	33	0	1	32	97%
Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	35	2	33	2	1	30	91%
Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	24	1	23	0	0	23	100%
Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	12	0	0	1	0	11	92%
TOTAL	*124*	*3*	*121*	*5*	*2*	*114*	*94%*

<p align="center">**Table 2:** Winter 2008 Survey Response Rates</p>

	Survey Universe	Left Program or Graduated	Eligible for Interview	Respondent Not Available	Refused	Completed	Response Rate
Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	12	1	11	0	0	11	100%
Alameda County: Mills College	6	0	6	0	0	6	100%
San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	32	0	32	0	1	31	97%
Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	30	1	29	1	1	27	93%
Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	23	0	23	0	0	23	100%
Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	11	1*	10	0	0	10	100%
TOTAL	*114*	*3*	*111*	*1*	*2*	*108*	*97%*

*Graduated

these second interviews, we asked students whether the conversation could be recorded, and all but three students agreed. These interviews lasted an average of 35 minutes, and were transcribed by Ubiqus, Inc.

Survey Completion and Response Rates

We attempted interviews with all 124 students in the six cohort programs in Fall 2007. As shown in Table 1, three students reported that they had dropped out of the program at the time of the interview. We completed interviews with 114 (94 percent) of the remaining 121 students. Individual county response rates ranged from 86 percent to 100 percent.

During the Winter 2008 interview, we attempted interviews with the 114 students who had completed the earlier interview. As displayed in Table 2, two students had dropped out of their programs, and one had graduated early. We completed interviews with 108 (97 percent) of the remaining 111 students. Individual county response rates ranged from 93 percent to 100 percent.

Data Overview

Three sources of data inform this report: the program databases, and the two telephone surveys. Table 3 indicates the source of each data element. In

instances in which certain data were included in both the program database and the Fall 2007 telephone survey, we relied on survey data for any information that was time sensitive. The Fall 2007 questionnaire included mostly closed-ended questions, with three open-ended questions at the end asking the students how their semester was going so far, what recommendations they had for improving their B.A. program, and what advice they would give to someone thinking about participating in such a program. The Winter 2008 survey included both closed- and open-ended questions, asking students about:

- their reasons for participating in the B.A. completion program;
- their experiences as a member of the cohort;
- skills, services and supports related to academics, linguistic capacity, and technology;
- financial aid;
- disability services;
- the relationship between their course of study and current employment;
- their educational attainment and background;
- their family status, as well as support from their families; and
- future educational and career goals.

Table 3: Sources of Student Cohort Information

Data	Sources
DEMOGRAPHICS	
Age	Program data
Gender	Program data
Race/ethnicity	Program data: SJSU Winter 2008 survey
Country of origin	Program data
Primary language spoken at home	Program data: CSU-EB Winter 2008 survey
Languages can speak fluently with children and families	Winter 2008 survey
Native language	Winter 2008 survey
Current family and household status and income	Winter 2008 survey
EDUCATION	
Highest level of education	Program data; Winter 2008 survey
Education obtained outside U.S.	Winter 2008 survey
If a degree holder, subject of highest degree	Winter 2008 survey
Child Development Permit Matrix level	Program data
EMPLOYMENT	
Type of ECE setting in which currently employed	Fall 2007 survey
Hours worked per week	Fall 2007 survey
Months worked per year	Fall 2007 survey
Hourly wage/annual salary (center-based)	Fall 2007 survey
Ages of children caring for	Fall 2007 survey
Job role	Fall 2007 survey
Tenure in current job and ECE field	Fall 2007 survey
Membership in professional organizations	Fall 2007 survey
EXPERIENCES IN PROGRAM: **Successes, Challenges and Recommendations**	
The cohort	Winter 2008 survey
Academic skills and services	Winter 2008 survey
Language skills and services	Winter 2008 survey
Computer skills and services	Winter 2008 survey
Disability-related services	Winter 2008 survey
Financial aid	Winter 2008 survey
Classes: content and schedules	Winter 2008 survey
Overall recommendations to improve the program	Both surveys
Advise to a student considering the program	Fall 2007 survey
EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT	
Impact of education on work with children and families	Winter 2008 survey
Support of employer and coworkers	Winter 2008 survey
Long-term educational and career goals	Winter 2008 survey
EDUCATION AND FAMILY BACKGROUND	
Educational attainment of family of origin	Winter 2008 survey
Childhood educational experiences and support	Winter 2008 survey
Educational role models	Winter 2008 survey
Support of current family members	Winter 2008 survey
Balancing work, family and school	Winter 2008 survey

The sample sizes ("N") reported in the following tables and charts are based upon the data sources: the program database, the Fall 2007 survey, or the Winter 2008 survey. All tables and charts indicate the data sources. Figures and tables in the body of the report contain data for students in all six cohorts combined; the supplemental figures and tables in the Appendix contain data for the individual cohorts.

Our discussion focuses on the sample as a whole, and notes variations among the cohorts. These variations have not been tested for statistical significance because of the small number of students within each cohort; however, we did test for statistical significance for selected variables for the full sample. We provide commentary on differences when appropriate, but we caution readers to be aware of the small sample sizes.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed in four steps. The first step was to inductively code all open-ended questions, in order to establish recurring categories that captured the meanings expressed by participants. Study team members individually read and coded ten percent of the interviews, then met to compare codes and settle disagreements by consensus. The team then coded additional interviews. Once these categories became saturated (Straus & Corbin, 1998), we finalized the coding scheme for each question. These codes were the basis for analyses of open-ended interview questions.

The second step involved data entry and analyses of all questions, using Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 15.0). Frequencies of all closed- and open-ended questions were computed to determine trends in the data for each individual cohort and for the entire sample.

The third step involved the process of categorical aggregation described by Stake (1995). Portions of each transcript were sorted according to their assigned codes (see step 1) and read to get a sense of the meanings given to each code. This report summarizes both the frequency of each code and the conceptual meaning behind the code, as reflected by responses provided by the interviewed students.

The final step involved performing inferential statistical tests such as chi-square analyses to examine trends in the data. All significant results are reported at a p value of .05 or better.

Study Design: Institutions of Higher Education

Two of the four county agencies funding the Learning Together study requested an in-depth examination of the experience of the participating institutions of higher education in their communities. Three institutions comprised our sample: a California State University, a private nonprofit university, and a private for-profit university. The local funding agencies identified key players at these institutions as interview subjects, and in the course of arranging the interviews, the research team identified several additional players. We interviewed a total of 13 subjects, ranging from four to six per institution. Four potential interviewees, all of whom held high-level administrative positions within these universities, declined to be interviewed, believing they could not offer useful information due to their peripheral involvement with the programs.

We sought to interview personnel within each institution representing a variety of roles in the B.A. cohort program, such as recruiting students, coordinating the program, providing instruction, or handling such key administrative functions as enrollment or processing payments. Specifically, the 13 subjects represented the following job roles: one university president, one associate dean, one admissions officer, three department and/or program chairs, five faculty members (two of whom were also program coordinators), and two program coordinators whose responsibilities extended beyond this cohort program.

Institutions organized their programs somewhat differently, but each designated a person on staff who was responsible for one or more of the following functions:

- design and oversight of off-campus and continuing education programming, including ensuring academic quality;

- recruitment, including addressing student inquiries and assisting students with admissions requirements, transferability of credits, the application process, transcript review, financial aid opportunities and applications, orientation, and registration;

- ongoing student academic advising;

- overall program coordination;

- management of relationships with community agencies and funders; and

- instruction.

In order to protect their confidentiality, interviewees are identified by their program roles, not by their names or the names of their institutions, whenever they are quoted in this report.

The study team developed a survey protocol in consultation with the cohort program funders, focusing on the following areas of investigation: interviewees' own motivation and level of involvement in the program; program development and operations; institutional capacity (including prior involvement in early education, available expertise among existing faculty, and prior experience with working adult students), community collaboration and resources, the relationship between the institution and the funding agency, institutional commitment, and program sustainability. The protocol was approved by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of California at Berkeley.

All but one of the interviews were conducted jointly by two of the CSCCE researchers who developed the protocol; one interview was conducted by one researcher. Nine of the interviews were conducted in person, and four were conducted by telephone at the request of the subjects. At the start of each interview, participants were asked whether the interview could be recorded, and all agreed. The interview recordings were transcribed by Ubiqus, Inc., and then coded and analyzed by the research team to identify common themes across job roles and institutions.

Our report is not intended to be representative of the variety of institutions that have initiated B.A. completion programs for the ECE field, but rather presents an in-depth look at three distinct institutions engaged in such endeavors.

Findings - Part I: The Students

A. Students In The Sample

The students participating in the six cohort programs represented several populations of interest to policy makers and others who are concerned with supporting the current ECE workforce in meeting higher qualifications, while simultaneously maintaining workforce diversity, reducing ethnic and linguistic stratification by job title and education, and building a pipeline to prepare new leaders who more closely reflect the diversity of children and families in their communities.

Student Demographics

We collected data on the students in each of the six cohorts regarding age, gender, race/ethnicity, linguistic ability, country of origin, and family and household status. With respect to ethnicity and language, most study participants were Latinos or other people of color, and nearly one-half identified their primary language spoken at home as being other than English—most often Spanish. The students in these cohort programs had demonstrated a commitment to the early care and education field, having worked continuously in center- or home-based settings for an average of about 16 years; this is discussed in more detail below, in the section entitled "Professional Life and Aspirations."

As shown in Figure 1, about three-fourths of the students were people of color. The Santa Barbara and San Francisco County cohorts were overwhelmingly Latino, and the Alameda County cohorts had the greatest percentage of African American students. (See Appendix Table A-1.) Not surprisingly, 97 percent of the students were women. Most were in their thirties or forties, reflecting California's overall ECE workforce, in which 52 percent of center-based teachers are 30 to 49 years old (Whitebook et al., 2006). Members of the Alameda and San Francisco County cohorts were older on average than others. (See Figure 2 and Appendix Table A-1.)

Figure 1. Ethnicity of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs
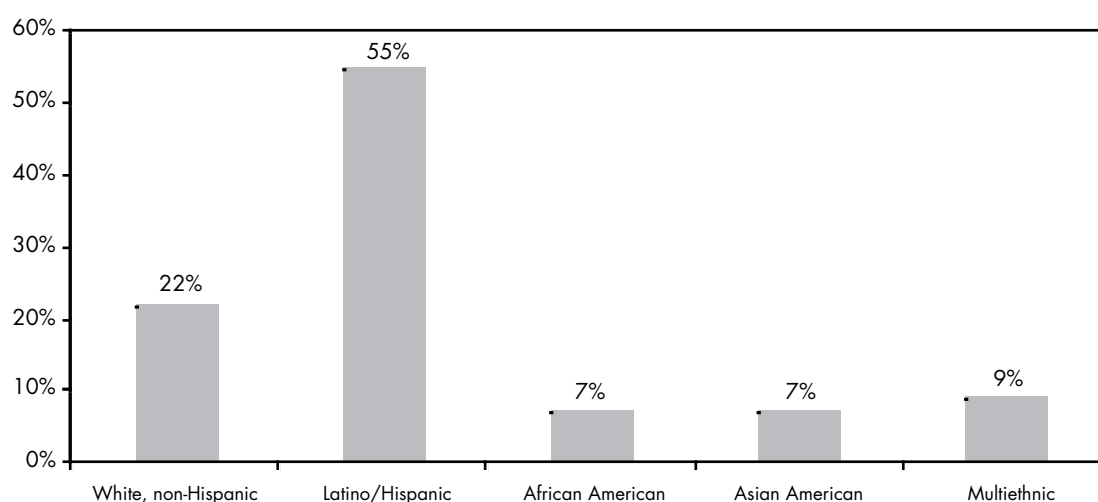
Program data and Winter 2008.
N=108

Figure 2. Age of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Program data
N=116
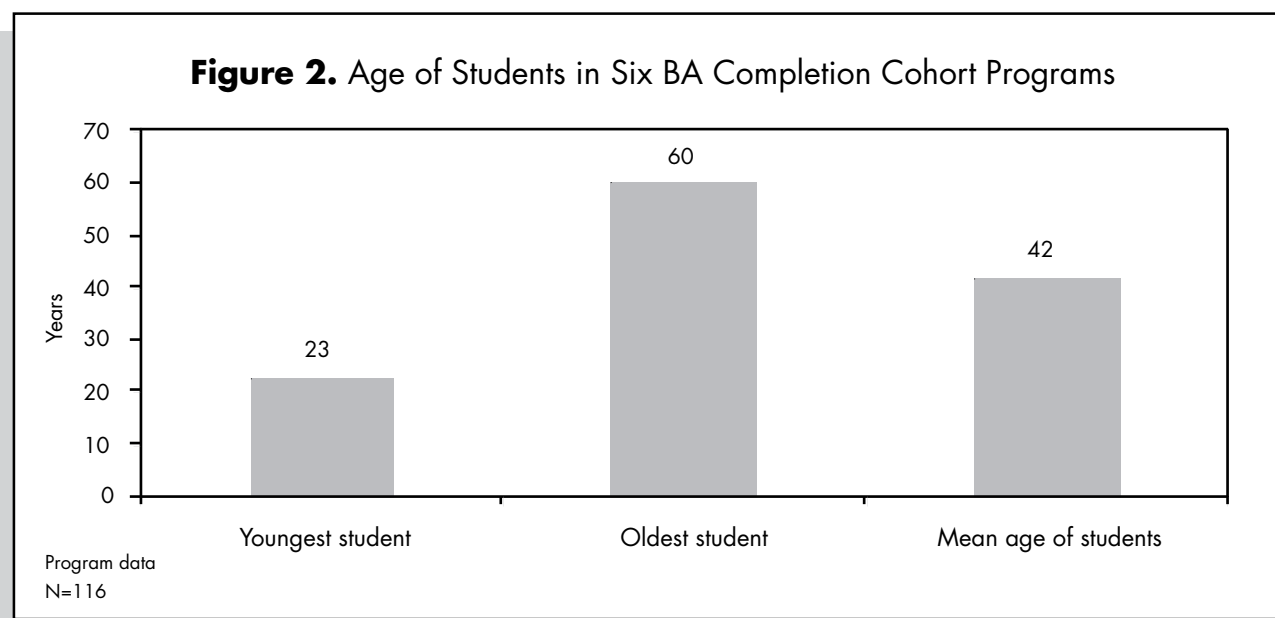
More than one-third of all students (38 percent), and the majority of those attending the cohorts at San Francisco State University (67 percent) and the University of La Verne (58 percent), reported having been born outside of the United States. (See Table 4 and Appendix Table A-2.)

We asked the students three questions related to language: their native language; their primary language(s) spoken at home; and the language(s) they could speak fluently when working with children and families. (See Figures 3 to 5, and Appendix Table A-3.) Slightly more than one-half of all interviewed students (53 percent) identified English as their native language. This varied among the cohorts, with all Mills College students calling themselves native English speakers, while only 26 percent of the San Francisco State University students, and 30 percent of the University of La Verne students, did so.

All of the students in the Mills College cohort spoke English as their primary language at home, while slightly more than one-half of the cohort students at Antioch University and San Jose State University did so. English was the primary home language for only one-third of the University of La Verne students, and for about one-quarter of the San Francisco State University students.

All interviewed students reported being able to speak English fluently with the children and families they served. In addition, one-half of all students were able to speak Spanish fluently, and seven percent were able to speak Chinese fluently, with children and families. The University of La Verne and Antioch University (70 percent each), as well as San Francisco State University (71 percent), had the largest proportions of students able to speak both English and Spanish with children and families. San Jose State and San Francisco State had the only cohorts in which students reported the ability to speak English and Chinese fluently with children and families (11 percent and 13 percent, respectively).

Most students (72 percent) reported being married or living with a partner. Slightly more than one-half (57 percent) had children under the age of 18 living

Table 4: Country of Origin of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

Country of Origin	
USA	62%
Outside the USA	38%
TOTAL	100%
N (Program data)	117

Figure 3. Native Language of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

6%
5%

37%

52%

Winter 2008
N=108

☐ English ☐ Spanish ☐ Chinese ☐ Other
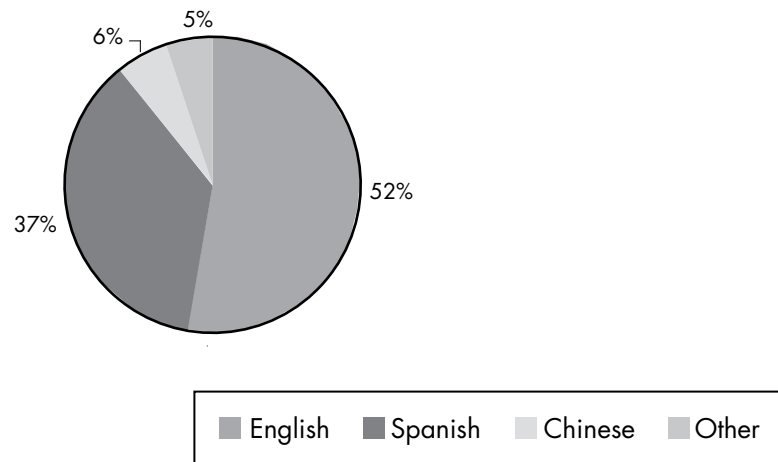
Figure 4. Primary Languages Spoken at Home by Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

3%
22%

54%

21%

Program data; Winter 2008
N=115

* Student might speak a second language that is not Spanish.
** Student might speak a third language.
***Student might speak another language that is not English.

☐ English, not Spanish*
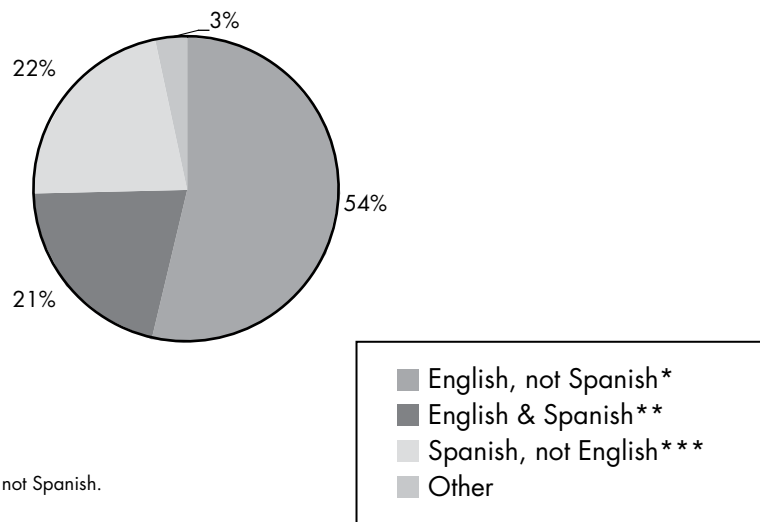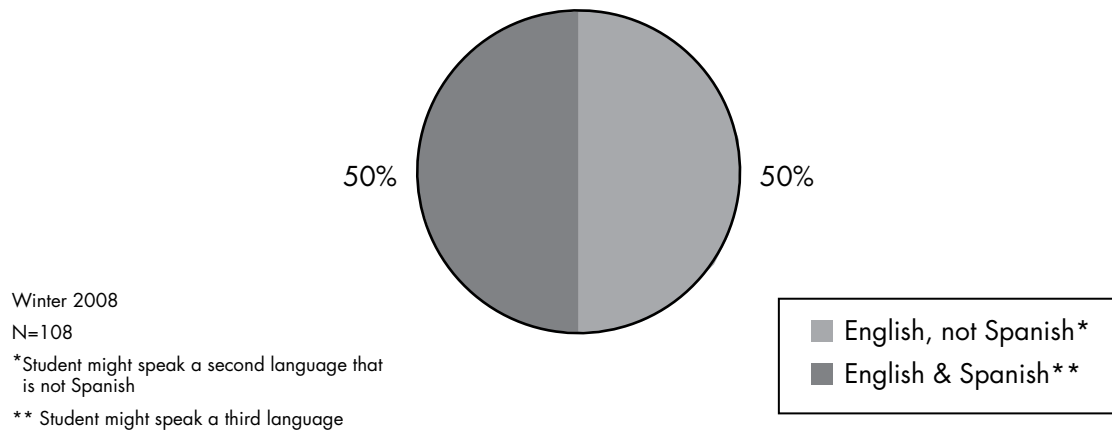☐ English & Spanish**
☐ Spanish, not English***
☐ Other

Figure 5. Languages Spoken Fluently with Children and Families by Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

50%   50%

Winter 2008

N=108

*Student might speak a second language that is not Spanish

** Student might speak a third language

■ English, not Spanish*
■ English & Spanish**

with them; 19 percent reported living with at least one child under age five; and about one-half (49 percent) lived with adults other than or in addition to their partner or spouse. (See Figure 6, and Appendix Table A-4.)

Student Educational Background and Attainment

Educationally, the students in the sample typically needed additional support in order to access a B.A. pro-gram and complete a degree, since most were among the first generation in their families to attend college. (See Figure 7.) In addition, forty-one percent of students in our sample had previously attempted to earn a B.A. degree. When asked why they had been unable to complete their degrees, 55 percent cited family and personal issues; 42 percent mentioned other items, such as academic or structural issues specific to their college program; and nearly 30 percent cited financial issues.

Figure 6. Family and Household Status of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

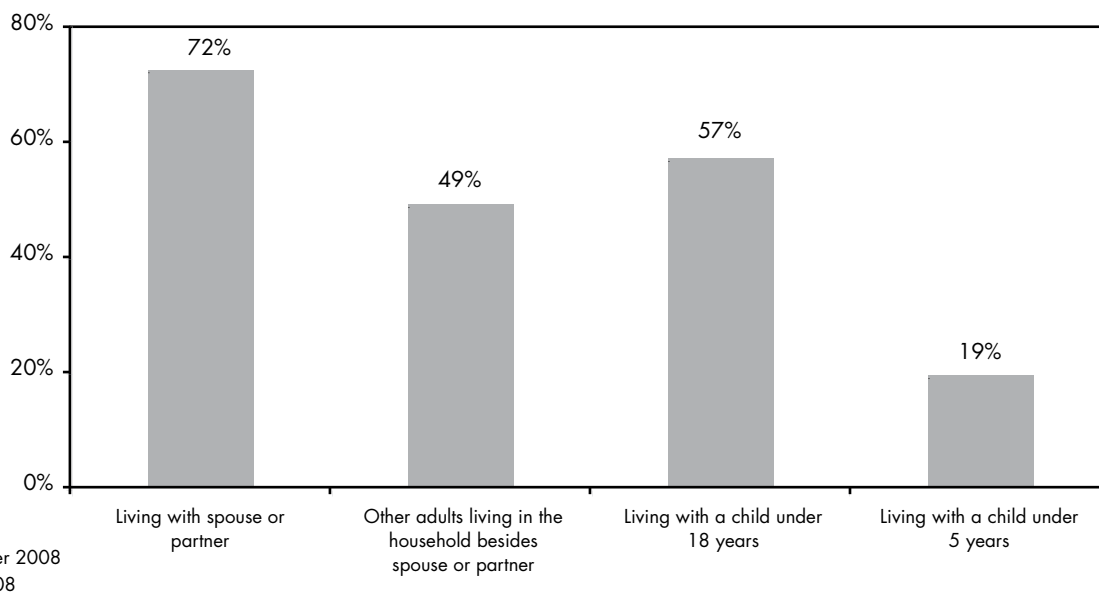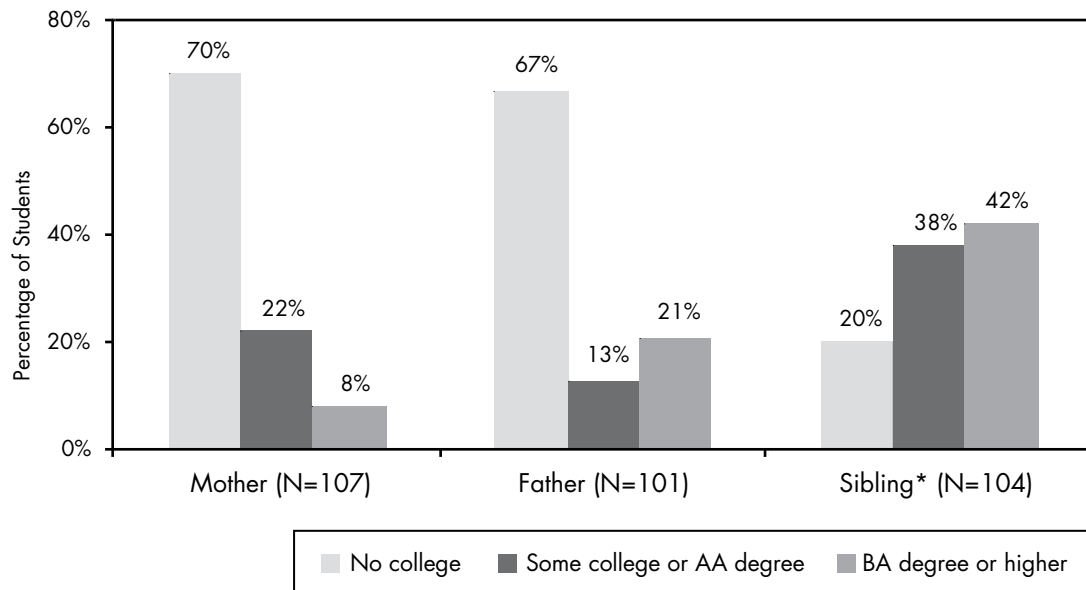|	
72%	Living with spouse or partner
49%	Other adults living in the household besides spouse or partner
57%	Living with a child under 18 years
19%	Living with a child under 5 years

Winter 2008

N=108

Figure 7. Educational Attainment of Family of Origin of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Winter 2008
*For students with more than one sibling, these numbers represent the highest educational level attained by any sibling.

As mentioned above, few interviewed students reported that their mothers (eight percent) or their fathers (21 percent) had completed four-year or higher degrees. No students in the CSU-East Bay cohort had mothers with a B.A. or higher degree, and no University of La Verne students had mothers with an A.A., B.A., or higher degree. Approximately one-half of students at San Francisco State University (59 percent) and the University of La Verne (56 percent), and almost one-third of Antioch University students (30 percent), reported that neither of their parents had earned a high school diploma.

While most students' parents had not earned college degrees, a number of students with at least one sibling (96 percent of the sample) reported that one or more siblings had completed some college education (80 percent), earned an A.A. or higher degree (54 percent), or earned a B.A. or higher degree (42 percent).

Although many students were among the first in their family to pursue a B.A. degree, many reported that their families were a major source of encouragement to pursue higher education, even as they were growing up. Two-thirds of interviewed students (65 percent) reported that relatives, including

parents, guardians, grandparents, and siblings, had encouraged them to pursue higher education:

> Because [my parents] didn't get a full education and their jobs were hard, they really encouraged us to go to college and get an education. Even as we graduated, they encouraged us to take extra classes here and there, and always to be involved in learning.

> Yes, [my family] encouraged me by helping me understand that studying is important, by making sure I finished my homework. They helped me out with essays, showed me the correct way of writing. My dad always talked about how important it is to get your college degree, and that I was "college material."

By contrast, 22 percent of interviewed students said that their families did not encourage them to pursue higher education when they were growing up, and 12 percent said that they were only "somewhat" encouraged.

In addition, 67 percent reported being encouraged by people outside their families, most often by teachers (39 percent) or friends (28 percent). Students who

Figure 8. Educational Attainment of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs
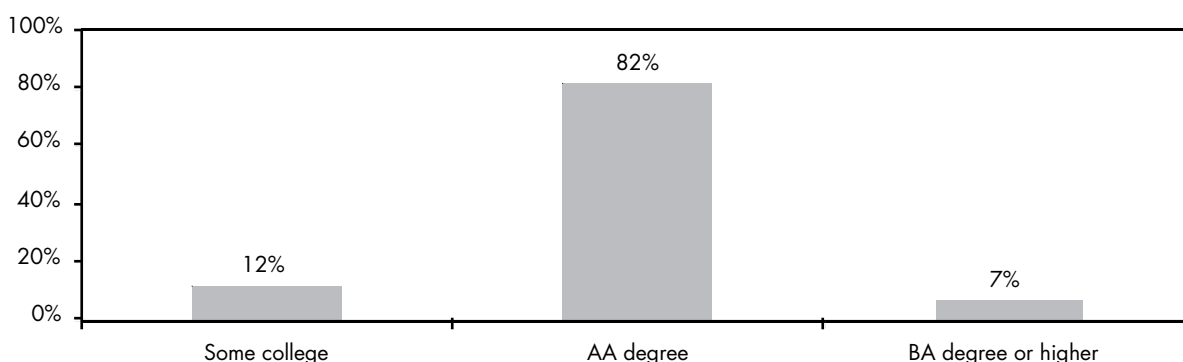
Winter 2008
N=108

received encouragement from family members were more likely to report also having received support from teachers (47 percent, vs. 25 percent of those who had been only somewhat or not encouraged by family) (χ^2 (2) = 6.96, p<.05). This was also true for friends: 34 percent of those who had been encouraged by family were also encouraged by friends, compared with 17 percent of students who had been only somewhat or not encouraged by family (χ^2 (2) = 9.18, p<.05).

As would be expected in a B.A. completion program, most students in these cohorts (82 percent) reported their highest level of education as an associate degree. A few students had completed another B.A. degree (seven percent), typically in another country, while others (12 percent) had completed some college work but not a two-year degree. (See Figure 8.) Four-fifths (80 percent) of the A.A. degrees held by cohort participants were in ECE. Overall, two-thirds of students with an A.A. degree had completed it five or more years prior to participating in the B.A. cohort program, but nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of the University of La Verne students had completed their degrees within the last five years. (See Appendix Table A-5.)

We also asked students whether they currently had any educational role models or mentors, and three-quarters said yes. While their answers varied about who their role model or mentor was, the importance of family surfaced more often than any other category of person, with 30 percent naming a family member:

My role model would be my mom. She's an immigrant to this country, and she came really young, at age 15, and didn't get to finish her schooling. But then she went back to school, and got her GED, and took college courses, and was able to maintain going to school, working, and home, too.

My husband. He always encouraged me and wanted me to get my B.A. He graduated from San Jose State and he got his master's, and wanted to get his Ph.D., but he stopped so that I could get my B.A. before he went on.

Relatives—by seeing how they manage their time to accomplish going to school, having a family and a full-time job, and that they're successful, and can get better jobs.

My role model, I could say, is my son. He's the one who keeps me wanting to just go and finish my degree. Seeing him, that he's studying hard, that he's a great student, even at his age—that's what keeps me going.

One-quarter of the students we interviewed named a boss, supervisor or center director where they worked as their role model. Students cited this person's dedication to children, the high value they placed on education, and watching them achieve in the workplace and encourage others in their own careers:

> My boss—I just learned so much from her, watching how she interacted with people, how she problem-solved, and how she sincerely wanted the best for children. Another [role model] was in a master's program, and I watched her complete her master's and then go through different job situations until she reached where she was—I just admired her perseverance.

> [My boss] earned an M.B.A., and I've watched her successfully build a business in an industry that's kind of uncertain, the child care industry. So it's pretty admirable, you know—a woman entrepreneur who runs a private, for-profit company. I've seen it grow; I've been there for 13 years, and seen many stages of it. And I've learned quite a bit, not only about child care, but about running the business. So that's been eye-opening, like "Wow, there are other opportunities besides being a teacher or a director." There's the business side of child care, too. So that's been definitely an influence.

Fifteen percent of students named a co-worker as a role model or mentor, citing various reasons—for example, that this person demonstrated a high degree of proficiency in early childhood practices, placed a high value on continuing education, or encouraged those around them because they knew firsthand what it's like to juggle work, family and school life:

> [My mentor is] a colleague who has a master's degree. Her child care practices are right on target. She's very reflective about what she does with children, and with families.

> At work we have several people who have their master's, and actually one of them just finished his, and he's constantly encouraging us to go to school and pursue [our education] no matter how old we are.

> [My role model] is the assistant that I work with. She does a fantastic job of showing me how well she balances her family, her school, and her work. She has showed me how well she can balance all that with the six children she has; she's able to do it. And I only have one, so that amazed me.

> My coworkers [are] my help right now. A lot of us are in the same boat, trying to get our B.A.s, and a lot of us getting our A.A.s. Just seeing everybody sticking with it— that's an encouragement.

Forty-six percent of students who reported having a role model or mentor listed someone other than a family member, boss or co-worker; these included friends, leaders in the ECE field, and former professors or teachers. None of these, however, was mentioned by more than a small percentage of students.

B. The Cohort Program Experience

The Decision to Pursue a B.A. Degree

Since the members of these cohort programs were working students, many of them "re-entry" students who had previously attended college, we were interested in learning more about their educational backgrounds, and in particular, their interest in pursuing a B.A. degree at this time.

We asked, "Why did you decide to complete your B.A. at this point in your career?" One-quarter of students said they had returned to school because of their jobs, either because of specific new requirements, or because they anticipated that a B.A. might soon be required. In particular, one-third of students at Antioch University, the University of La Verne, and San Francisco State University said that a degree was necessary for their jobs; at these three institutions respectively, 65 percent, 50 percent, and 24 percent of cohort students were employed at Head Start, which in 2008 increased the percentage of teachers and other staff required to hold a B.A. degree with a specialization in Early Childhood Education.

Fifty-one percent of students told us they had chosen to return to school because of their own educational aspirations. Many said that earning a B.A. had been a long-standing personal goal, and others talked about how furthering their education would help them in their work with children and families:

I think it's important, as a preschool teacher, to follow through and learn as much as I can about the field that I teach in.

A B.A. is something that I've always wanted, but I kept putting it off. I had kids, and when I found a position that paid really well, I thought, "This works for now"—so it was easier to put school on the back burner, because I didn't need any more education for this position. That went well for a while, but I still had this yearning, just for my own personal growth, to get that bachelor's degree.

I love the job position that I'm in, as a teacher, and I have no desire to move up, because the next step is in administration. I feel that [a B.A. degree] communicates a lot better to the parents about my abilities. It shows that I care enough about what I'm doing, to want to do it to the best of my ability, and to improve my knowledge in the field.

I never had the opportunity to go to school. I'm the first generation in my family to get a higher education, and I'm the second oldest of ten, and I always had to help out in the family. It took me 27 years to get my A.A. degree. Once I had children, we were always tight with money. [But] I've always wanted to finish my schooling. I want to go all the way to a doctorate, and I know what I want to do in my career.

We also asked students why they had selected the particular B.A. program they were attending. Fifty-two percent cited financial considerations—namely, that scholarships and other financial support had made college attendance possible. Fifty-one percent mentioned the convenience of the program in terms of location and class scheduling. Some were drawn to specific features of that college or university, such as a bilingual program, small class sizes, student diversity, the particular institution's educational philosophy, or its reputation or prestige:

My dream has always been to get a B.A.—and this was a bilingual program, and it would help me in the job I was in, and there was financial support. I really liked the whole idea of the program. We were going through as a cohort, and that also helps.

I've been thinking about getting my B.A. for some time, and it turned out that they were offering a program just at the time when it was possible for me to do it with my schedule at work. And also they were offering the B.A. in the field that I was really interested in, which was Early Childhood. It just came at the perfect time. All the stars were aligned.

The composition of the group was very appealing. I was very excited when I went to the first meeting and saw so many Latinas, and people close to my age. The other reason was that from the information I got at the first meeting, I realized that this would be the best way to [complete a B.A.] in a shorter time.

I really like that [this institution] is specifically sensitive towards adults who have not been in school for a long time—they're really focused on making sure that we're successful. I just like their philosophy.

I had taken three or four weekend seminars in Early Childhood here, and I just loved the classes so much; I thought they were fantastic. I wanted more. I also admired their lab school very much.

While only 18 percent of interviewed students specifically mentioned selecting their program because of the cohort structure, we will see in the next section that nearly all students reported that working in a cohort had made them more successful in their classes.

I felt that, being in a cohort, you have camaraderie and extended support, not only with the instructor but also with your peers—learning together, working together. I felt that that was what I wanted for myself.

I liked being able to work through all of the classes as a group, instead of individually. I found that to be very helpful. Working in a group, I find that there's a lot more support. It took me a long time to get through earning enough credits at the community college level because I kept getting frustrated and I would drop out of classes pretty quickly. So, yes, I found this to be a real support system.

Students' Views on the Value of a Cohort Program

As noted earlier, 82 percent of interviewed students did not initially rank the cohort design of their program as a primary reason for choosing to attend it. But since cohort programs have been identified as a way to help working adults succeed at earning higher education degrees (Drago-Severson et al., 2001), we were interested in knowing whether their assessment of the cohort's importance had changed over time, as they participated in the program. In the vast majority of cases, we found that it had.

We asked about the types of activities that students shared with fellow cohort members, in addition to attending classes. As shown in Figure 9, cohort relationships frequently extended beyond the classroom. Ninety-four percent of students reported working on class projects with classmates, and meeting outside of class or talking on the phone about school issues. Eighty-six percent reported such contacts outside of class to talk about work-related issues. Eighty-three percent mentioned studying with other cohort members, and 78 percent mentioned socializing and forming friendships. Thirty-six percent reported commuting to classes together by car-pooling, and nine percent by taking public transportation.

We also asked, "Have cohort activities helped you to be successful in your classes?" Ninety-six percent of students said yes. Seventy percent emphasized the personal support they received from cohort members, such as morale boosting, understanding one another's stresses, and motivation; a similar proportion (69 percent) described helping each other academically:
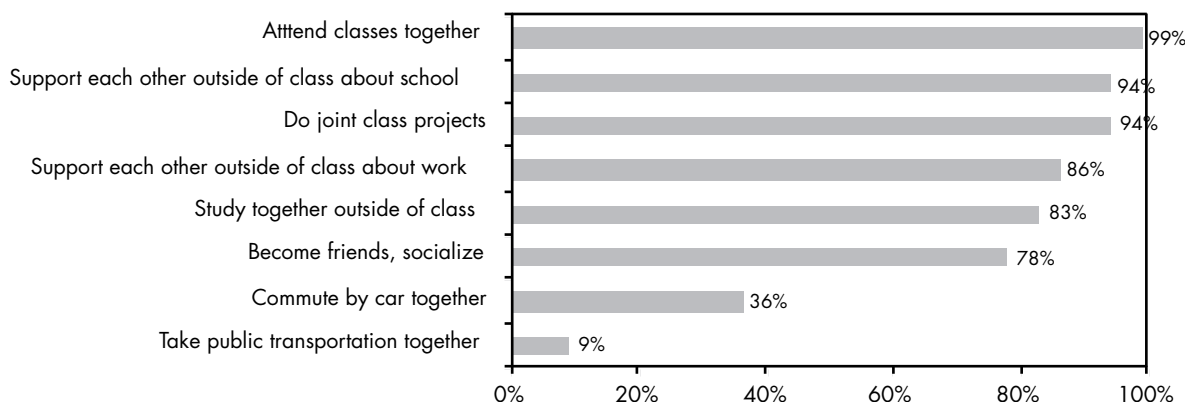
Somebody might be just at the end of their rope, and say, "I feel like I'm going to drop out, this is too much," and then somebody in a different [state of mind] at that moment might say, "Hang in there, it will look better next week," or whatever. Our emotional states aren't always the same, so we support each other in that way.

Sometimes life gets in the way, and [your classmates] encourage you to get through—they don't let you quit, they don't let you fail.

Others said that knowing that fellow students were in the same boat helped to foster stronger bonds among them, even a sense of family:

Having someone who is in the same field of work as you, working just as many hours, and having family responsibilities, with the added pressure of school—it's just nice to have someone who's going through a very similar situation.

Figure 9. Percentage of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs Participating in Cohort Activities

Activity	Percentage
Attend classes together	99%
Support each other outside of class about school	94%
Do joint class projects	94%
Support each other outside of class about work	86%
Study together outside of class	83%
Become friends, socialize	78%
Commute by car together	36%
Take public transportation together	9%

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N=107

I definitely [appreciate] having the support each time going into a new class, feeling that you don't have to make new friends each time. Knowing that you have the continued support of your classmates is very good. Even though we have a new teacher for each class, it's the same core group.

Our social relationship is almost like that of a family—our friendships have really grown.

Having learned about this combination of emotional and academic support that had helped them persist through their first year of study, we then asked, "Is there anything about the cohort that doesn't work well for you?" Only twenty-six percent said yes; of these, 46 percent noted some aspect of group dynamics—for example, the challenge of attending multiple classes over an extended time with individuals one doesn't care for, or members who don't "pull their weight" by attending meetings and classes consistently. Some mentioned bilingual issues, discussed elsewhere in this report.

Academic Skills

Considering the challenges that working and re-entry students might face in returning to college for a B.A. completion program, we were interested in their own assessments of their level of skill, particularly in the areas of academics, language, and use of technology. We began by asking, "Do you have the academic skills you need in order to be successful in your classes?" Sixty-eight percent said "yes," 29 percent responded "somewhat," and three percent said "no."

Among students who said that they "somewhat" had the academic skills they needed, or did not have such skills, the challenge most often cited was academic writing (77 percent). Twenty-nine percent cited one or more other challenges, including math, study skills, and how to make presentations. Nineteen percent mentioned challenges related to reading. Several students talked with us in more detail about their writing and reading difficulties:

One of the classes is a writing class. I passed the writing skills exam, which is required [for entry into this program], but I still feel, through no fault of the university's own, that my writing skills just weren't up to par. So I've struggled with learning these

things, especially when I only meet once a week with the group.

One of the things that all of us are struggling with, including myself, is the academic writing. And [the university] recognized that, and we did do a quarter in academic writing. The instructors are all aware of that, too, and academic writing is something that they incorporate into all their classes. The more we practice, and the more opportunities that we have to write, the easier and the more comfortable it's going to get for us. To be honest, I was really scared about the writing part. I could barely write my thoughts down and make it sound right. I haven't had that much practice, and [the university] is making it fun for me; they're helping me to develop.

Several students who were not native English speakers talked about the particular challenges they faced in doing college-level writing and reading. One student commented, "I am understanding my class reading, but because English is not my first language, I need a little help sometimes for the writing." Another said, "Writing, especially essays, is something that I have to do more—that's one of my hardest parts." For yet another student, reading was the greater challenge:

I just need to spend more time reading—I need to work on reading comprehension. I don't know if it's natural, but I have to read slowly and try to comprehend. So writing for me is much easier than reading. I love to read, but when it comes to textbooks and stuff like that, it's much harder. But in this last year, I really got better at reading—I take notes, I try to question what I'm reading—so I'm improving. But I'm not going to say that it's easy for me.

By contrast, one student talked about the challenge of entering a program in which she was learning to write in Spanish, not English, as her second language:

Writing papers is hard when it's in Spanish. I love this program—I think it's a great program, but not everybody can succeed in it, because you've got to be at a certain level when this program begins, to jump in where they're at. Speaking for myself, sometimes you need classes that are a little slower; you can't really keep up with that fast pace.

Math was a less frequently cited but still common challenge. One student who felt confident overall, both about her writing abilities and her years of experience in the ECE field, said, "Math, not at all—I'm struggling with math!" Another said, "I have to take a statistics class, and math is my weakness—so no, I'm not prepared." Still another, despite the difficulty, reported having a positive experience with math classes:

> Math has always been a struggle for me and I was fearful returning [to school], knowing that we were going to have to do some math. Right now we're doing statistics, and we'll have it for two quarters, but the instructor teaching the class knows that we have this fear, and she's great. She makes it easy. She makes it fun, so that we're able to learn and it's not like, oh my God, my hands get sweaty when I think of mathematics.

In addition, fifteen percent of interviewed students said they had a physical or hidden disability that impacted their ability to be successful in completing a college degree; some of these students mentioned a learning disability, or one or more physical or mental health challenges. Only a few of these students reported receiving assistance from the university related to their disability, although one-half said that they would welcome any assistance the university would offer.

Next, we asked students whether they were receiving the assistance they needed in the areas that were difficult for them, and secondly, what kinds of assistance would help them develop the academic skills they needed.

Eighty-one percent of all interviewed students reported that they were not currently receiving any assistance specifically related to their academic skills. Among those who said they were receiving assistance, about one-half said that they received helpful feedback from their instructors.

About one-third of the students interviewed (37 percent) cited one or more areas of assistance from their college or university that would be helpful to them. More than one-third (38 percent) mentioned a need for help with dual-language issues; this need was particularly pronounced at San Francisco State University, cited by 65 percent of students there. Language issues are discussed in further detail in a separate section below. Another one-third of interviewed students (35 percent) asked for writing assistance. Other areas of assistance included help with study skills, math, and spelling.

Some students also recommended more comprehensive student advising as an important way to improve their cohort programs. Specific issues cited included counseling related to articulation between two- and four-year institutions, and to managing one's academic career within the university or college itself.

Language Skills

As discussed previously (Figures 3 to 5), slightly more than one-half of all interviewed students (53 percent) identified English as their native language, and more than one-third of the interviewed students (37 percent) reported Spanish as their native language. All interviewed students reported being able to speak English fluently with the children and families they served. In addition, one-half of all students were able to speak Spanish fluently, and seven percent were able to speak Chinese fluently, with children and families.

We asked the students from Antioch University, CSU-East Bay, the University of La Verne, and San Jose State University whose native language was other than English about their English skills. Since all Mills College cohort students were native English speakers, they were not included in these analyses. The San Francisco State University cohort was unique, having been designed as a dual-language program; the analysis for that cohort is described separately. The great majority of students at the other four institutions (89 percent) felt that their English skills were sufficient in order to receive a passing grade in their classes. Only seven percent were currently receiving any assistance for their college or university to improve their English skills, while 21 percent thought that the institution should provide other assistance in this area. The most common suggestion was individualized tutoring to improve their writing skills.

Ninety percent of the San Francisco State University students said that the dual-language aspect of the program influenced their decision to participate. For many native Spanish speakers, the greatest incentive was having a program in their native language while also learning a new language:

Since it was going to be bilingual, there would be lectures and books in Spanish, and it would be easier to learn the material if it was presented in my own language. This makes me feel more confident about what I am learning.

I will be able to speak my own language, and if I have any questions, there will be somebody who will help me.

If you don't know how to express [something] well in English, you can go ahead and do it in Spanish, and nobody is judging you. That's really good.

As one student said, "Both languages are necessary in the community where I work." Another noted, "I'm interested in becoming a bilingual teacher." Many welcomed the opportunity to reinforce their Spanish while becoming fluent in a second language, because it would help them communicate better with children and families:

I was excited that I would be challenged to learn a new language and possibly become fluent. I am not fluent, but I have learned so much more, [which will] enable me to work in the classroom with the children, and with the parents.

I really believe that kids coming in as toddlers and preschoolers have the right to be made to feel more at home, by hearing their home language and having it valued and respected.

This aspect of this program was really appealing to me, because I work with different families and different cultures, and it all helps in better communication.

In many cases, students who had lost their Spanish over the years saw this program as an opportunity to relearn and appreciate the language:

I speak Spanish, but I have lost a lot of it because I wasn't able to practice or speak it, so being in the dual-language program helps me improve my Spanish skills.

Growing up, I didn't have that support of being bilingual, so there was one point when I kind of thought Spanish was bad. In high school I started to

take more Spanish classes and become more fluent again. [It's very helpful] to continue to learn from other Spanish speakers.

One thing that I really like about the program is that it has helped me to connect more with my language—to appreciate my language.

More than one-half of the San Francisco State students (58 percent), however, said that it was difficult to do college-level coursework in two languages. All of the native English speakers found this to be a difficult task, while 44 percent of the native Spanish speakers and 67 percent of the native Chinese speakers felt the same. Many suggested that students who would be learning Spanish should have some foundation prior to starting the program, and many reported having difficulty with reading and writing in their second language. A number of students also mentioned that it was difficult to pay attention to their primary language when simultaneous translation was going on; some suggested having smaller groups, in order to facilitate students' level of concentration.

I think it would be helpful if I could have a basic Spanish class. Most of the reading is academic, and I'm not at that level.

[The Spanish speakers] might not speak very fluent English, but they speak enough to understand. I don't understand Spanish at all. [They] understand English and can write in English; it might not be great, but I can't do even a little bit of Spanish. This is really hard for me; I feel like I missed out on half the class, because I didn't understand anything [the instructor] said—half the class is in Spanish.

I see how important it is to learn a second language. I never thought about it until I had to do a presentation, and I'm not able to speak Spanish. It made me understand how children feel when they come into our program, and they're crying for two weeks because they don't speak anything but their home language. That's how I felt when I was doing my presentation in the bilingual program; my group just started speaking Spanish, and I felt so out of place. So this program opened my eyes, making me realize what children are going through. I really put more effort into understanding and trying to speak some of the child's language, or asking a parent or somebody

who does speak it to give me two words I can say to the child, something I can pronounce. So I've started doing that, whether they speak Chinese or Spanish, whatever, to make that child feel confident. We can't learn all the languages, but just a few words, for our children's' sake, [can make] a big difference.

All students in this cohort felt that participating in the dual-language program had increased their understanding of the background and experiences of children and families of other cultures:

It has helped me to understand the cultural diversity that exists in the United States. I am more open in my ideas now that I see things from other cultures. It has also helped me at work, because I never understood why some people acted they way they did. Now I know that it is part of their culture. I always wanted/ expected others to follow the Latin culture, but now I know that I cannot expect everyone to follow our cultural behavior, because they grew up in a completely different culture.

We can take advantage of the diversity of the group to really confront our own prejudice and our own shortcomings.

There are people [in the cohort] of many different races—Chinese, African American, White. We share experiences that [we had] never really thought about. I didn't know that there were more similarities than there were differences. That was a very good insight for me.

We asked San Francisco State University students an additional question specifically related to the bilingual aspect of their cohort program. Approximately one-quarter (27 percent) of these students who had recommendations for improving their cohort classes made suggestions about this part of the program. Sixty-one percent of these students felt that the university should provide additional assistance specifically related to taking classes in two languages, including translators and other help for non-native Spanish speakers, and help for students who spoke little or no English:

Next time, if they do a cohort like this, maybe prep the individuals ahead of time who are going to be a part of it, who do not have a second language, maybe six months prior to going to class, to have a better understanding of a second language and not come in with nothing. Because the first day you get there, it's half in Spanish and half in English.

How can we include the ones that don't have any Spanish background? How can we include them in this program [so that] they are still successful and feel that they can make it? I really think that if we have a Cohort Three, it would be a great idea to screen the students to find out what kind of Spanish they speak, and offer a class for the ones not speaking even elementary Spanish. It might take us longer to get that B.A. degree, but at least we'll be successful in two languages.

Many expressed the need for tutoring in writing, in English and/or Spanish, focusing on grammar and academic writing:

It would be good to help people find a tutor who speaks Spanish, because sometimes what has made me uncomfortable is that they only speak English. I understand that I have to learn English, but for grammatical issues, it's easier for me to understand if it's explained in Spanish, even though I know I will eventually have to do the work in English.

Other suggestions included the creation of dual-language programs in languages other than English/Spanish:

In another class that I have, I met a lot of Asians who were interested in becoming part of the program, but when they found out that it was in Spanish and English they were discouraged. I think there should be opportunities to do the program in other languages. Now there is a long waiting list. At first, no one believed in this program, but now that they are seeing that it's working, there is a lot of demand. That's why I say that the fair thing [would be] to create a program in other languages.

Technological Skills

We also asked students a series of questions about their computer-related skills, given the challenges that many re-entry students can potentially face in this regard, especially because of the rapid pace of change in technology over the past two decades. When asked whether they had the skills for taking notes on a laptop during class, 71 percent said yes, but 29 percent said they did not have such skills and needed help. Most students (58 percent) said they needed help in learning to use various software programs, such as Excel or Power Point, while 42 percent felt confident of their skills. Most students said they had the skills they needed to conduct online research (85 percent) or to do other computer-related work, such as typing, using an email program, and downloading documents (81 percent). (See Figure 10.)

All but four percent of the interviewed students reported that they had regular access to a computer. We then asked those with computer access whether that computer contained all the technological tools they needed in order to be successful in school. Seventy-nine percent said yes; of the 21 percent who said no, 41 percent cited a need for better Internet access, 32 percent needed a faster or less outdated computer, and 50 percent mentioned needing various accessories, such as software or a printer.

Finally, we asked students whether they were receiving any assistance from their college or university to improve their computer skills. Eighty-nine percent of interviewed students said no. When asked whether such assistance would be helpful, 50 percent said yes; of these students, 45 percent asked for software help, and 41 percent asked for general help with computer skills. Fifty-one percent of students who wanted computer help said they would prefer to take a specific computer-related class; others, by contrast, asked for individual tutoring, workshops, or more attention to technological issues within their other classes

Financial Assistance

As noted earlier, one of the major challenges for students in college- and university-based ECE teacher preparation programs is the insufficiency of funds to support tuition costs and other expenses (Whitebook et al., 2005). Financial assistance is one of five categories of student support that have been shown to decrease attrition and increase success among working adult students in higher education, such as those participating in this study (Dukakis et al., 2007).

To explore how students were coping with the financial aspect of their education, we asked, "Is the financial assistance you are currently receiving sufficient for you to complete the program, or

Figure 10. Computer Skills Needed by Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Software programs — 58%
Taking notes on a laptop during class — 29%
Online research — 15%
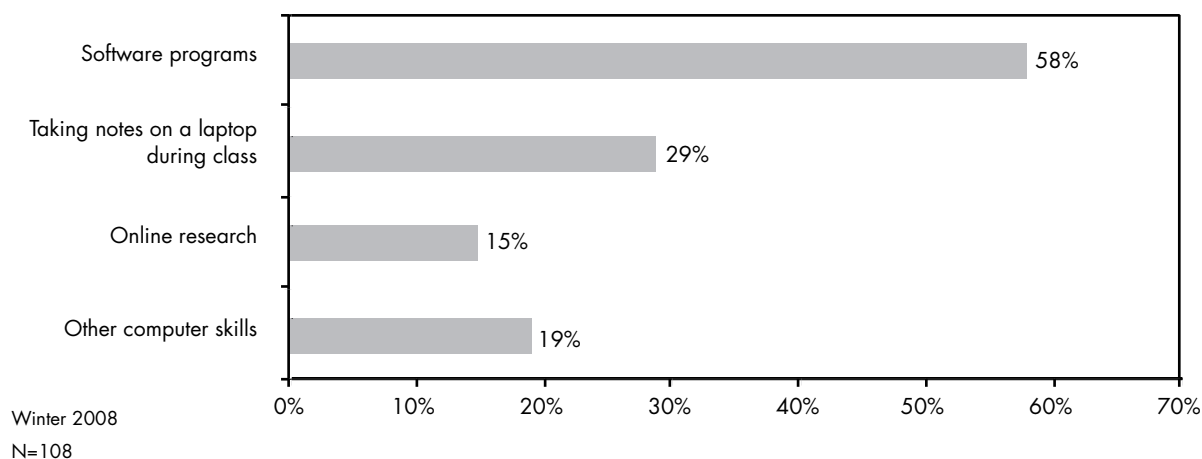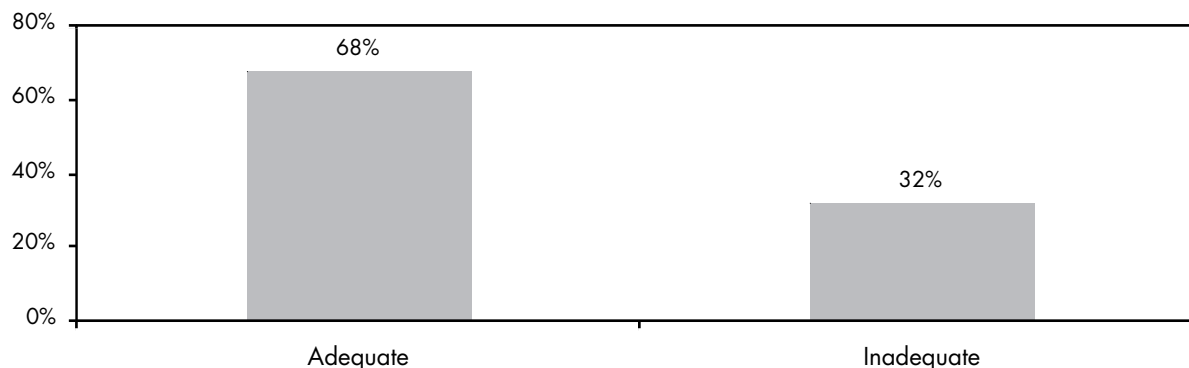Other computer skills — 19%

Winter 2008
N=108

Figure 11. Adequacy of Financial Assistance, as Reported by Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Winter 2008
N-=104

is there additional assistance that you will need?" Students' views on the adequacy of financial help involved two related issues: the level of support they received from the institutions of higher education (for tuition, books, and other fees), and the level of support they received from their employers (such as time off with or without pay to pursue coursework or field placements). Interestingly, when we asked students to specify the sources of the financial assistance they were receiving, they often did not know.

As shown in Figure 11, most students (68 percent) responded that they were receiving enough financial assistance, although the percentages varied widely across programs, from just 17 percent of students at Mills College to 92 percent at San Jose State University. (See Appendix Figure A-1.)

These differences reflected the range of tuition and other costs at each institution, the various levels of financial assistance offered by each cohort program, and the degree to which employers provided additional financial help to staff participating in the cohorts, such as paid time off to attend weekday classes. As shown in Table 5, students did not pay any tuition or fees at San Francisco and San Jose State Universities. Tuition costs were covered for CSU-East Bay students, although the students paid for books and materials themselves[2], and were required to apply for all available financial assistance. Students

at the three private institutions—Antioch University, Mills College, and the University of La Verne—paid a portion of their tuition and other expenses.

Some employers developed policies to underwrite certain costs associated with higher education for their staff. San Francisco State University students working at Head Start programs, for example, were paid when they attended daytime classes, while students employed in other types of child care programs were not

As indicated in Figure 11, 32 percent of students called the financial assistance they were receiving inadequate. When asked to describe what additional support they needed, many noted their discomfort with student loans, as opposed to grants or scholarships. One student mentioned having to pay certain costs upfront and wait for reimbursement; another found it difficult to pay out of pocket for elective courses not covered by her cohort program scholarship. Others wanted more assistance with the cost of books and other non-tuition expenses, or different policies at their places of employment:

> *I'll have a substantial student loan to pay back at the end. I could use as much financial assistance as I can get. Some of the other people in the cohort qualified for Pell grants, and different grants and scholarships, so they have a lot more financial assistance than I do. But because my kids are grown, and my husband and I both work, we don't really qualify.*

[2]In subsequent cohorts, CSU-East Bay will pay for students' books

Table 5: Student Financial Assistance in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

Institution	Costs to Students
CSU-East Bay	Tuition is covered by First 5 Alameda County, although students must apply for any other financial assistance for which they are eligible. Students pay for books and parking.
Mills College	Students receive a tuition reduction, paying $1,930 per course, reduced from $5,090 per course. All students must apply for any other financial assistance for which they are eligible. First 5 Alameda County supports the tuition reduction.
San Francisco State University	No costs to students. Those working in Head Start are paid by their employers when taking daytime classes.
Antioch University	Students pay $4,148 of the $17,872 tuition for the seven-quarter program. Financial assistance is provided by First 5 Santa Barbara scholarships, which are matched by Antioch University. In addition, students receive stipends from STAR (Santa Barbara County's CARES program), which are also matched by Antioch.
University of La Verne	Students pay $5,410 of the $18,170 tuition for the 10-semester program. Financial assistance is provided by First 5 Santa Barbara scholarships and STAR stipends.
San Jose State University	No costs to students.

I am receiving financial assistance, but I am looking into not getting into debt with student loans—I want to get more scholarships instead of loans.

It would be lovely if they could also include books, because books are very expensive.

The financial aspect of losing a day's pay every other Friday, and having to pay a sub at my second job, has been a bit hard. It has changed the way that I budget, and it's made it harder to pay bills.

Schedule of Cohort Classes

Students in B.A. completion cohort programs are offered a set schedule of classes arranged by the cohort program and the university. Although class times and days vary, most programs provide classes in the evenings or on weekends. This nontraditional schedule is often necessary, and many working students prefer it. Despite the challenges of balancing school, job and family responsibilities, 68 percent of interviewed students reported that their class schedule worked well for them, citing the meeting times, days, and/or length of classes:

We meet Wednesday nights, 4:00 to 7:45 in this class. It works because it's been consistently Wednesdays, and it's consistent enough for my employer. And we don't get home too late.

Before they offered this program, I was looking for classes to go back to school to finish my B.A. And it was hard for me to go back to San Jose State, because they offered classes in the morning, in the afternoon, and that was my work time—it conflicted. So I just gave up. But now this program offers me every class once a week, or sometimes two times a week, at four o'clock. My work schedule is 8:00 to 4:00, so I have only one day when I leave fifteen minutes earlier. And they plan everything for me, so I don't need to think, OK, I finished this class, now what is my next class?

Right now it's working fine, because it's evening classes after my work hours, and then the next class is on Saturday—just half a Saturday. So it's convenient because I still have the rest of Saturday to work and do the rest of my family stuff.

While several programs have sought student input when scheduling classes, our interviews showed that student likes or dislikes of particular class schedules were highly personal. While some liked their schedules because they fit into their work or family life, others preferred a different schedule for the same reasons. Of the 32 percent of students who preferred a different schedule, or who liked their class schedule only "somewhat," 55 percent preferred

classes on a different day, and 45 percent preferred classes at a different time than was currently offered:

It is difficult for me, because I am commuting and the classes begin at 4:00, and my day care is open until 6:00. And I have to leave just after 3:00, which means three hours of coverage at work. If my helper is sick, or at times I haven't had help, it's been really stressful to get to class on time. I'm sure that for some people it's great, but I would like it if they started later, like at 6:00.

The schedule works for me, but there is a problem with the Fridays. A lot of our site managers are not supportive of you working toward a B.A. degree on your job time. They feel it's professional growth and should be done outside of your job hours. I know the second cohort attends classes on Saturdays and Sundays; that would have worked better for me.

Students' opinions about their class schedules also varied depending on whether they had young children. Forty-eight percent of students who had at least one child between the ages of five and 12 preferred a different class schedule, or liked their schedule only somewhat, compared to only 26 percent of students who did not have a child in this age range (χ^2 (1) = 4.47, p<.05). The opposite was true for students with children older than age 12, who were less likely to say they preferred a different class schedule or liked their schedule only somewhat (13 percent) than were students who did not have a child older than 12 (39 percent) (χ^2 (1) = 7.17, p<.01).

Students' Recommendations for Improving the Cohort Classes

In addition to changes in their class schedules, more than one-half of the students we interviewed (59 percent) gave recommendations for improving cohort classes. Of these students, 24 percent suggested changes related to the consistency of instruction, and/or communication among instructors of the different classes. Responses varied among cohorts, with none of the Mills College students, about 14 percent of the CSU-East Bay and San Francisco State University students, 21 percent of the San Jose State University students, 31 percent of the Antioch University students, and 80 percent of the University of La Verne students making this recommendation:

If they [could] space our classes so that both of them [didn't involve] so much writing at the same time, and we didn't have to juggle so many essays at once, that would be nice.

Some of the instructors are familiar with the [program's] system and philosophy, and some are new, so they didn't have a lot of communication with each other this last semester. And that's why we were getting so much homework from all of them, because they didn't know what the other instructors were giving us, and we were getting research papers, case studies, all these things due all at the same time.

I think the teachers need to be more on the same page. We've been taught different things by different teachers, such as APA style—one teacher would say, "This is right," and the next one would say, "This is wrong." That was kind of frustrating, and it happened with at least three or four teachers. I understand that a lot of the teachers are part-time, and they do teach at other schools, but it's difficult.

Along similar lines, 16 percent of students with recommendations wanted better preparation and more professionalism from the faculty teaching the cohort classes. Some suggestions focused on better communication with students:

We had one teacher this quarter who didn't even know how to use Blackboard. So that held us up from doing assignments and getting them completed ahead of time if we chose to. He downloaded one assignment on a Wednesday that was due Friday; if he had done it on Monday, when we all needed it, some of us could have finished.

There were two very strong instructors, and two who needed some work. It had to do with two of them not giving feedback. If your assignment had been great, what did they like about it? Where could you improve? You'd just get a grade on an assignment and no feedback, or no grade at all. And then you'd [wonder], "What did you think of this work? I put a lot of time into it."

Sixteen percent of all students with suggestions recommended improvements to the classroom environment. These came primarily from students at San Jose State University (29 percent) and San Fran-

cisco State University (23 percent), and ranged from online access to having enough chairs for all students:

Finding a room where we can all sit a little more comfortably—that's something that's difficult right now.

> *The location [is] a Head Start program, and they don't have enough space.*

> *We don't have enough chairs and tables. And most of us like to bring a computer in, because most of our instructors work through the computer, [but] in order to hook up you have to sit on the sidelines.*

Some students were particularly concerned about condensed classes, and the impact that a shortened semester had on them as working students. Ten percent of all students who had suggestions—and 36 percent of such students at San Jose State University—recommended that their cohort program look carefully at condensed classes:

> *I know that we're in the fast track, and sometimes the fast track is overwhelming. I don't just feel it myself—I feel it from other people I have spoken with. It's 16 weeks [in a semester], and we're doing things in 10 or 12 weeks, depending on what class it is. Now we're taking two classes, and there's a paper due every week in one class, and every other week there's a paper due for the other class, and we're going really crazy.*

> *In some of the courses, they have taken a traditional one-semester course and condensed it into 10 weeks without taking out a lot of the content. We know that it's accelerated, so it's expected, but I think they have to realize we're balancing a lot.*

> *The instructors are all great. But they need to give us some special treatment, because we're a special group. I hope they consider that we are working full-time, and the homework sometimes is really tight. One of the classes we are in now, we have five assignments and six journals to write. Then we have two exams.*

More than one-half of the students with recommendations (58 percent) made suggestions not mentioned above, although none of these were made by more than nine percent of such students. The suggestions included changes to the lab practicum, taking fewer classes at the same time, less homework, more focused coursework on early childhood development, more in-class study time, and more hands-on course work.

Students' Recommendations Related to Cohort Program Administration

Some students made additional recommendations related to program administration. A few talked about the importance of a more comprehensive orientation to the program, so that students could be better prepared for the upcoming challenges:

> *I would say, realistically prepare them. This is a lot of work. You really do have to figure out how to balance your work and your family, if you have to work.*

> *Before people start, I think that they really need to say, "This is what is going to be expected, these are the classes you're probably going to have to take." I don't think we had a clear picture.*

> *The only thing that was hard for me was jumping into an already existing program. It would have been nice to have an orientation before going in, not just, "Pass this test, get these transcripts." Maybe, "This is what you can expect; this is what's gone on before."*

Several students from one of the six cohort programs talked about the importance of better communication with the program administration. This included having a consistent person from the cohort regularly checking in with the students, mechanisms for receiving student feedback and input, and mechanisms for the administration to inform students about important program developments:

> *[I recommend] getting feedback early on from the students about how the program is working. They should be asking us if we're getting the help we need.*

> *My main recommendation is communication. I understand this is a pilot program, and a lot of things changed, but I think that at times they kept us out of the loop, which led to some misunderstandings, or they made decisions and didn't include us in what was going on.*

The other thing I would recommend is for them to check in with students. That's something we do with our preschool families. We meet with them from time to time, and see how things are going. Just that emotional connection that somebody is caring about how you are—just knowing that somebody is rooting for you—would really be beneficial. I'm not talking about lots of time. I'm thinking ten minutes every six months with each student would really help.

C. Professional Life and Aspirations

A central expectation behind increased educational requirements for ECE practitioners is that these will improve educational practice, leading to better learning environments and outcomes for children. In this initial year of this study, we asked students to reflect on their professional lives and aspirations, and the impact of their school experience on their work as early childhood educators. In subsequent phases of this study, using observational measures, we hope to examine changes in students' professional behavior.

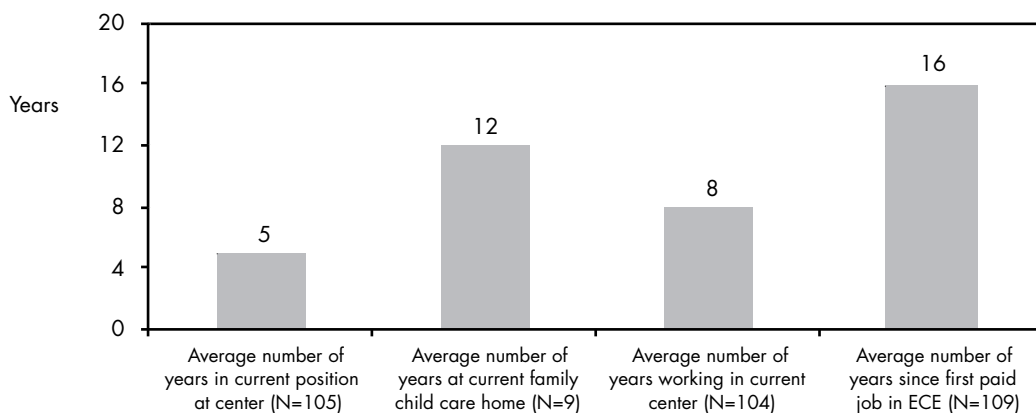### Students' Employment and Professional Status

The B.A. completion programs examined in this study were intended for working adults committed to long-term careers in the field of early care and education. As shown in Figure 12 and Appendix Table A-6, all six institutions had succeeded in attracting participants with considerable experience, both in the ECE field and in their current positions and places of employment.

Across cohorts, students had an average tenure of approximately 16 years in the ECE field, with most reporting that they had worked consistently in the field since their first paid job working with children. Center-based students averaged nearly eight years in their current places of employment, with one-half or more in all but the Mills College cohort having worked in their current centers for more than five years. Similarly, with the exception of the Mills College group, less than 20 percent of students in each cohort reported having worked at their current places of employment for less than two years. Students working in family child care also reported relatively long tenure, averaging 12 years in their current business.

We were also interested in other indicators of students' involvement in and commitment to the ECE field, such as voluntary membership in professional organizations. The percentage of students belonging to a professional organization varied considerably by cohort, from 75 percent at CSU-East Bay to 45 percent at the University of La Verne. The most common membership was in the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or one of its affiliates, with the exception of students at San Francisco State University, who were more likely to report membership in a different organization. (See Appendix Table A-6.)

Figure 12. Tenure of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Years

- 5 — Average number of years in current position at center (N=105)
- 12 — Average number of years at current family child care home (N=9)
- 8 — Average number of years working in current center (N=104)
- 16 — Average number of years since first paid job in ECE (N=109)

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Figures 13 to 17 summarize information about students' places of employment; ages of children served; job roles; and hours worked. (See also Appendix Tables A-7 and A-8.) In all six cohorts, most students worked in child care centers; in three of them—CSU-East Bay, Antioch University and the University of La Verne—all students did so. Twenty-nine percent of the students worked for a Head Start center or agency, and 49 percent were employed by a center contracted with the California Department of Education.

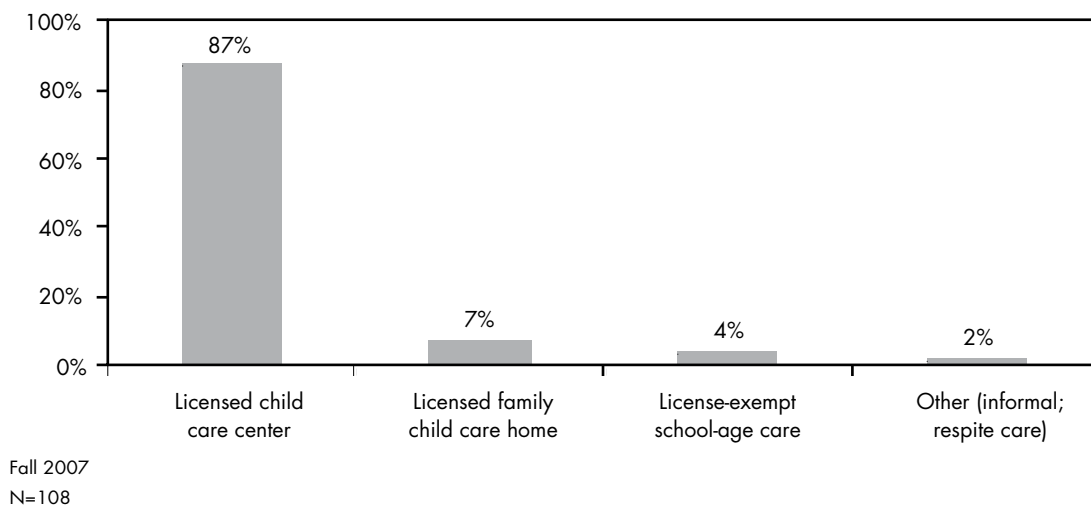**Figure 13.** Students' Places of Employment in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Fall 2007
N=108

Figure 14. Subsidy Status of Centers Employing Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Fall 2007
N=86
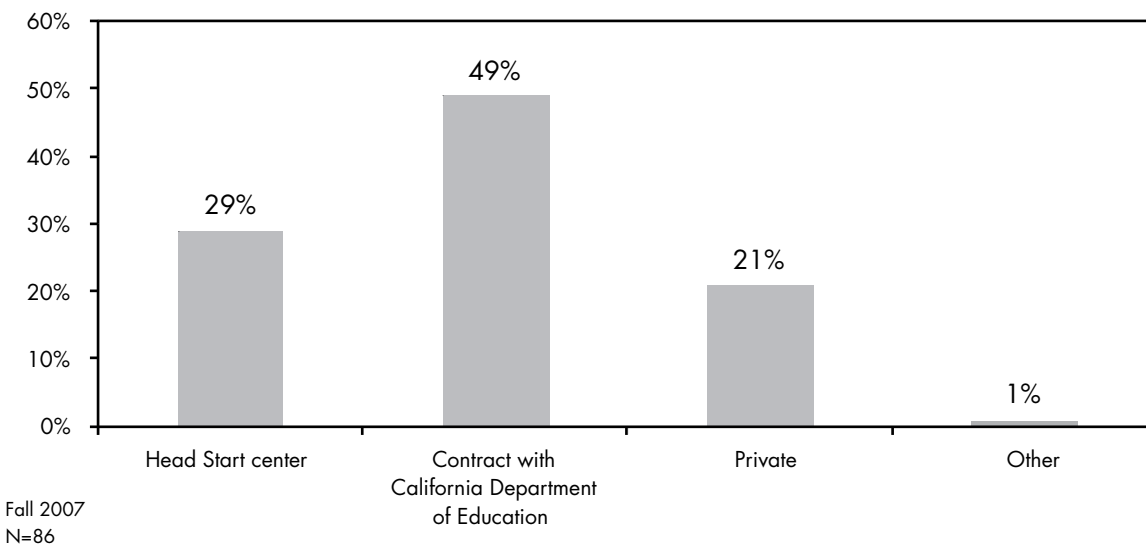
Figure 15. Ages of Children Served by Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Fall 2007
N=114
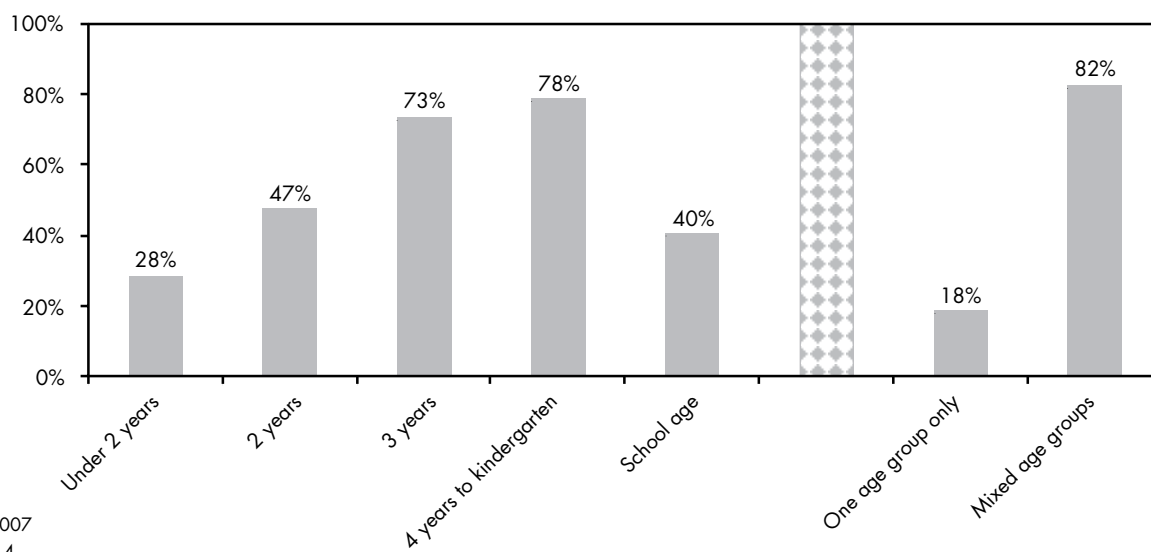
Most students worked with mixed age groups of children, as shown in Figure 15. A greater proportion of Mills College and CSU-East Bay students than in other institutions reported working with a single age group of children. While a higher percentage of students worked with preschoolers than with infants, toddlers, or school-age children, the cohorts included members with experience with children from birth through school age.

Among students working in licensed child care centers, the most common role was lead/master teacher, followed by an administrative position such as site supervisor, program director, or executive director. Less than 15 percent of students in each cohort were assistant teachers. (See Figure 16.)

Most students reported holding paid employment for more than 30 hours a week, with average schedules

Figure 16. Job Titles of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs (Center-based)
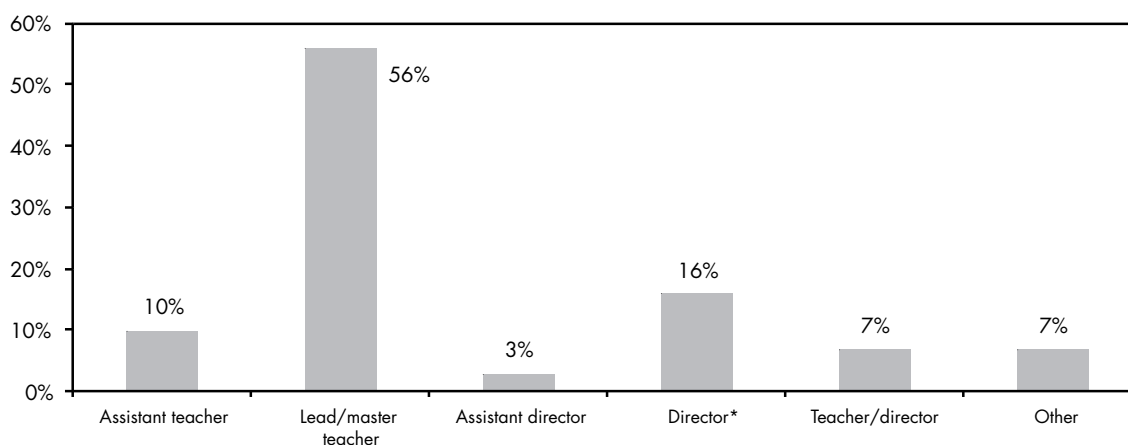
Fall 2007
N=98
* Includes site supervisor and executive director

Figure 17. Work Schedules of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Fall 2007

	30 or more hours per week	Less than 30 hours per week (N=114)	Full year (11-12 months)	10 months or less (N=113)
	89%	11%	69%	31%

ranging from 32 hours at CSU-East Bay to 41 hours at San Jose State University. A greater proportion of CSU-East Bay students (33 percent) than in the other cohorts reported working less than 30 hours a week. A sizeable proportion of students across all cohorts reported working a ten-month or shorter year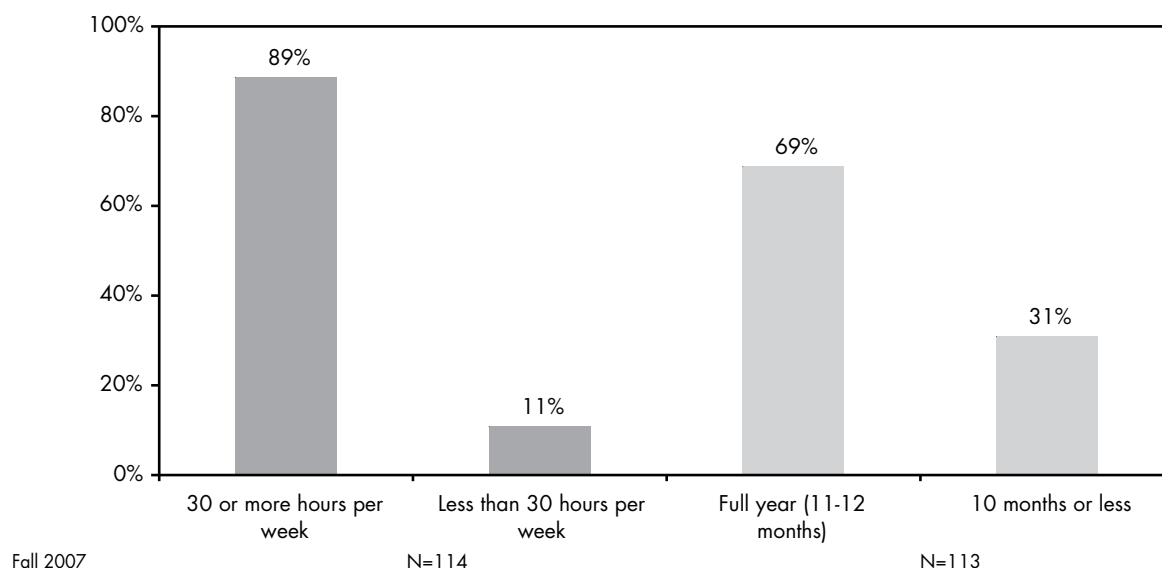, in part a reflection of their employment in Head Start or State Preschool programs that operate on an academic rather than calendar year. This was particularly true of the University of La Verne cohort. (See Figure 17.)

Further, given that most of these students had considerable tenure in the field and held relatively advanced positions, we expected their salaries to be above the median wage for early care and education jobs—especially since many worked in programs with public contracts, such as Head Start and State Pre-school, which often pay higher-than-average salaries.

As shown in Table 6,[3] he average salaries reported by teachers were slightly higher than those earned by the highest-paid teachers with bachelor's degrees in their communities. In three cohorts, however—Antioch University, CSU-East Bay, and the University of La Verne—as many as one-third of students earned less than $15.00 per hour.

Table 6: Compensation of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs: All Students

Compensation	Assistant Teachers	Lead or master teachers	Site supervisors, program directors or executive directors
Lowest hourly wage	$12.64	$7.60	$15.00
Highest hourly wage	$26.50	$53.49	$30.49
Average hourly wage	$16.36	$20.70	$22.37
N (Fall 2007)	10	52	14
Highest average salary paid to teachers with a B.A.: Bay Area, adjusted* (Whitebook et al., 2006)		$19.40	
Highest average salary paid to teachers with a B.A.: Santa Barbara County, adjusted* (Whitebook et al., 2006)		$20.06	

*Adjustment adds a 2% increase for each year, 2005 and 2006.

[3]Table 6 includes salary information for assistant teachers, lead or master teachers, and those in a site supervisor, director, or executive director position; we excluded those who reported some other position or combination of positions, because of very small sample sizes.

Employer and Coworker Support

Although the cohort programs were designed to meet the needs of working adults, students often needed to adjust their work schedules in order to participate. All six programs involved classes with a fieldwork or practicum component, which posed challenges for students who worked 30 or more hours per week, and typically required flexibility on the part of employers and coworkers.[4]

To explore how students navigated the demands of school and work, we began by asking, "Is your employer supportive of you as you complete your degree?" Eighty-one percent of students reported that their employers were supportive, although these percentages varied among programs, from 62 percent at San Francisco State University to 100 percent at Antioch University. The remainder (19 percent) reported that their employers were only somewhat or not at all supportive of them as students.

Of those who said their employers were supportive, 68 percent cited flexibility about scheduling, allowing them time off to study or attend classes:

My director understands the amount of work that is necessary. When I'm doing homework during work hours, she's okay with that, and if I want to stay home to review for a midterm, she understands that, too.

The final week last quarter was difficult for me, because I was taking too many classes. My director allowed me to take a day off so I could study, and she didn't give me any problem with that at all.

[My employers] were pushing me to go ahead and do it. At the beginning of the year, I had to tell them when I was going to be off, and they just made sure they had substitutes when I wouldn't be there.

Other students who said their employers were supportive (41 percent) spoke of employers offering verbal encouragement and praise—for example, by showing interest in their B.A. program, asking about their classes, or giving them opportunities to share what they were learning:

[The director] constantly asks me what I've learned, and tells everybody how proud she is of me. I'm given four hours a month to stay home and study; it helps a lot, and it's paid time. I'm also given time every month at the staff meeting to talk about something important I've learned at school.

I have led some staff meetings on what I'm learning in class. I have also done another weekly meeting, and I am being compensated for that.

They are happy and proud of us. Our director came to our group and talked about how they feel about us being in school. We feel like very important people!

About one-quarter of students who said their employers were supportive (23 percent) reported employers also providing some form of financial support, by helping with the cost of books, providing stipends for earning a certain number of units, or allowing them to take time off for classes or fieldwork without reducing their pay. Finally, some students reported that their employers showed support in other ways, such as acting as resources by helping them to understand readings and other assignments.

Among those who found their employers only somewhat supportive, most talked about receiving mixed messages about being in school. One interviewee characterized her employer's attitude as, "We're letting you do this school thing, so we can just keep putting more children in your class. I'm doing you a favor; I'm allowing you to do this, so you need to work more for us." Several others mentioned that their employers had expressed irritation about the difficulty of finding substitutes.

Those who did not consider their employers supportive spoke about inflexibility around scheduling, such as being unwilling to switch a staff meeting to accommodate a class schedule, or refusing requests to take vacation days for studying.

Recognizing the importance of support from other staff, we also asked students, "Are your coworkers supportive of you being in school now?" Eighty-three percent replied yes, 15 percent said they were somewhat supportive, and two percent (two students in the sample) said they were not supportive. Those who reported that their coworkers were supportive were more likely to report that their employers were also supportive (χ^2 (1) = 5.03, p<.05).

Among those who considered their coworkers supportive, 59 percent mentioned verbal and emotional support. Twenty-nine percent said that coworkers

[4]Future interviews will examine more closely how students manage their fieldwork requirements.

took on more responsibility when they had to leave for class, or helped them find time to do homework. Twenty-five percent mentioned relying on coworkers as resources to assist with schoolwork. Seventeen percent reported that their coworkers considered them to be resources, now that they were seeking a degree—coming to them for information, and even feeling encouraged to pursue more education themselves:

> My coworkers are very supportive. I've had opportunities to share a lot of information with the head teachers about what I'm learning, and how they can implement it in their classrooms as well. I've been able to encourage other staff members to go to school this year. This past semester, we had five people going to school, which we are very happy to see. They see me doing it, so then they know that they can do it, too.

Impact of School on Work

Next, we asked, "Is your participation in this program having an impact on your everyday work with children and families?" Ninety-six percent of interviewed students said yes, and many of them described more than one positive type of change. When we asked them to describe these impacts, 90 percent said that they were able to apply what they had learned in class directly to their workplaces:

> I'm learning how to be a better classroom manager, [from the] practical hands-on advice I am getting and the information I'm learning. It has really enhanced my teaching skills—for instance, trying to say everything in the positive, instead of saying, "Don't do that."

> I've learned so much with regard to philosophies, ways to interact with children, teaching styles, and what is appropriate and inappropriate. I really enjoyed our language class, and I'm training my staff to look for different behaviors or cues from children in certain situations, that will help them work with that child better. Also, in learning new ways to teach children, we're able to communicate that to the parents. It's been very helpful within my program.

> I took nutrition last semester. One of [my complaints] where I work is that we give the children cold cereal for breakfast, and especially in the winter, I didn't think it was right. So we got together as a team and came up with new breakfast ideas; now the three

middle days of the week are hot, cooked breakfasts. I'd been trying for a couple of years [to work on this issue], but when I brought in backup [information] from the nutrition class, it worked.

Students also noted ways in which their education was helping them to improve their interactions with parents and coworkers:

> This semester I took a Language Acquisition class, and I have two students who are speech-delayed in my classroom. I think it certainly has equipped me to be able to speak to the parents about how we can support their child.

> In one class, we're learning about our biases and cultures. I think it's opening our eyes to how we relate to people, and the hidden biases we have. It's improving my overall skills in working with parents and staff.

> I've been able to express myself more openly with families, and also with employees. I'm more open to suggestions. If something is going on, I'm able to work it out in better ways, and I learned this in a Communication Skills class.

Others reported an increased sense of confidence and professionalism:

> I think I have grown a little more professional. Before, everyone considered me a babysitter, but I know that is not true. We are educators.

> I have learned to value my language—that my language is important in the classroom. Even though I have been teaching Spanish at my current job for eight years, these classes have made me feel more sure of myself. I know that it's worth it to teach a second language. I have created more activities to get the parents more involved. And the literature class has really taught me how to incorporate literature in my classroom.

> I feel so much more confident working with children. I feel like I have so much more knowledge. In the past, I had an A.A. and I thought, "That's enough." But this has made a big difference. It makes me feel able to give so much more to the children I work with.

Educational and Career Plans

While there is no guarantee that students' current plans for the future will come to pass, it was striking that so many interviewees articulated a desire to pursue even more education. When we asked students, "Do you have any educational goals beyond your B.A. degree?" 83 percent said yes, with students at CSU-East Bay and the University of La Verne somewhat less likely to state this goal. (See Figure 18 and Appendix Figure A-2.)

Of those considering further education, 86 percent expressed interest in pursuing a master's degree, and 10 percent expressed interest in a doctorate. Most spoke of degrees either in child development or in a related field, such as psychology, that would prepare them for other roles with young children. Fifteen percent mentioned planning to continue their education, but not necessarily in a degree program or in an early childhood-related field. Some mentioned the possibility of pursuing more education if financial assistance became available. For many students, participation in a B.A. program had broadened their horizons, their sense of what they might accomplish in their careers:

I never planned to go any higher than an A.A. degree, but these instructors got hold of me. My professors at community college said, "You need to get a B.A., keep going." And now the professors here are saying they would really like to see me get my Master's in Special Education. But I'm 50, so I don't know. If I get my B.A., that's going to be a big celebration.

I have always wanted to get a master's degree. I would really like to go through the process of writing a thesis. It would probably be something related to human development—this field is definitely where my heart lies.

I don't think I want to stop going to school. I love it. I've always said that I am going to get a doctorate even if I am 102 when I do!

My children say, "Mom, I can't believe you're going back to school." They're going to be really shocked when they see I'm going back to get my master's!

Regarding their future employment plans, we asked students, "Five years from now, where do you think you'll be working?" As shown in Figure 18 and Appendix Table A-9, most students assumed that they would continue to work in the field of early care and education, although nearly two-thirds thought they would hold a new position, either in their current workplace (32 percent) or in a different role within the field (37 percent).

Those planning to remain at their current places of employment saw themselves as advancing their positions—for example, from teacher to education coordinator in Head Start, or from lead teacher to site supervisor or director in other settings. Those considering a different role within the field spoke of owning their own schools someday,

Figure 18. Educational and Career Aspirations of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs
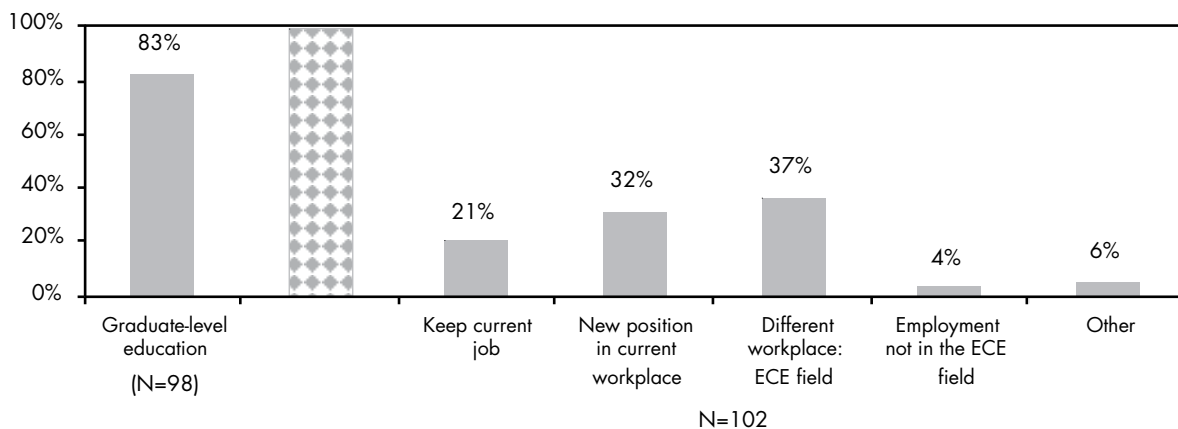
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wanting to work with different populations of children, such as English language learners or children with special needs, or assuming more administrative roles or non-teaching roles. Only 21 percent of the students thought that they would remain in the same job once they had completed their degrees, and only four percent intended to leave the early childhood field. In future years of this study, we intend to track students' employment and educational activities

D. Impact of School on Family Life

Student Households

Undergraduates pursuing a degree directly after high school often live with other students and typically do not have children, while working adult students are more likely to live in households with spouses or partners and children under 18 years of age. As noted earlier (Figure 6), 72 percent of the students in our sample reported living with a spouse or partner. More than one-half (57 percent) reported living with at least one child under 18 years of age for 50 percent of the time or more, and 19 percent reported living with at least one child under age five. About one-half (49 percent) reported living with other adults besides a spouse or partner—most frequently, an adult child (68 percent), followed by another family member (38 percent), or a roommate (eight percent).

Household configurations varied by students' ages. Those under age 40 were more likely to be single (28 percent) or unmarried (43 percent) than were cohort members who were 40 or older (eight percent single, 19 percent unmarried) (χ^2 (2) = 7.96, p<.05). There were no differences by age regarding students who were divorced. Students who were 40 or older were more likely to have at least one adult child (18 or older) than were the younger students (χ^2 (1) = 25.77, p<.001).

Family Relationships While Attending School

Adult learners returning to school may face internal struggles, such as concern about being away from their children or about maintaining a certain family or household role (Dukakis et al., 2007). Of the 41 percent of students in the sample who had previously pursued a B.A. degree, over one-half (55 percent) cited family and personal issues as preventing them from

completing their studies. Often, the birth of a child had led to the decision to leave school. As one student said:

> *I was sacrificing a lot of time with my son, my firstborn, and I just figured that school had to be put on hold because it was necessary, for my family, for work to be my priority.*

During the Fall 2007 interview, 19 percent of students recommended that prospective cohort participants consider work/family issues carefully, making sure that they recognized the impact that school attendance would have on their lives. As one said, "You have to have support from everyone around you: your family and your employer. Talk to them before you begin, and make sure they will be supportive of your educational efforts."

To follow up on the issue of familial support, we asked, "Overall, is your family (including partner/spouse, children, parents/guardians, other relatives) supportive of your being in school now?" Ninety-five percent of students said yes, four percent said "somewhat," and only one student said no. As shown in Figure 19, family support included general encouragement, help with housework and/or child care, help with homework and/or the computer, and respect for study time.

Seventy percent of students reported that their family members provided emotional support and encouragement, including urging them to study, or acting as "cheerleaders" when they felt overwhelmed:

> *If I tell my husband, "I'm very stressed," he says, "Well, you have to take it day by day," or, "Just look where you were some time ago, and look where you are now."*

> *When I won't work on my homework or I get distracted or frustrated, my boyfriend is the one who sits me down, because he's also a student, and says, "We'll just take it step by step." It's been very helpful.*

> *There was a time when I was having a problem because some of my credits wouldn't transfer and I had to retake classes. I finally said, "Forget it, I'm not going to do this, I'm not going to bother." And my daughters said, "Mom, you have to do this. You have to finish. You've worked so hard. You got us through school, now you have to go."*

Figure 19. Family Support for Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Encouragement and support	70%
Help with housework/child care	46%
Help with homework/computer	30%
Respect for study time	27%
Other help	12%

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N=104

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%
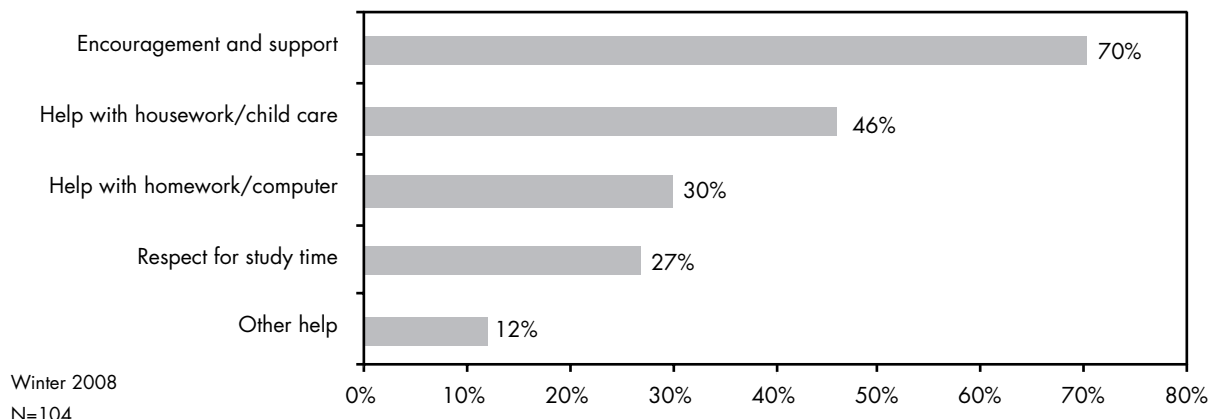
Students also mentioned their family members' expressions of pride about their working toward a college degree:

My parents are always telling me how they're proud of me, and always wanting to hear about my experience.

I hear [my mom] on the phone talking about me being in school, and about the books I'm reading and how interesting they are. She just went through the sixth grade, but she's an extremely intelligent woman. I share with her all that I'm learning and reading.

Some students also reported that, because of the example they were setting by attending school, their children or spouses were setting higher educational goals for themselves:

My children are looking at the example I'm giving, and I don't want to let them down. They are already talking about what they're going to do when they're in college—it's something that I wanted for them, and for all my family. And my husband—he only has a high school education, so this has been a motivation for him to go back to school. As soon as his employer allows him the opportunity to go, too, he wants to do that.

Just when I'm ready to quit, they tell me to keep going. I'm too close now. And my daughter just got her A.A., and she wants to transfer. She's watching me and saying, "It's harder to learn when you get older, huh?" and I say, "Yeah." So that's telling her, "Do it now!"

About one-quarter of students (27 percent) also mentioned how family members supported them by protecting their school and study time from other pressures:

If I don't want to go to class, my husband says, "That's not a choice, you have to go." And my family—if they know I have a midterm or I need to study, they take the boys, or just give me time, by not asking too much of me.

When I need alone time to study, my husband and mother occupy the kids downstairs, or get them out of the house. And sometimes I'm sitting here thinking, "What am I doing? This is way too hard. I don't know that I can get through this." And they're saying, "Okay, yes, here, let me get you a coffee." My mom brings me breakfast upstairs—things of that sort. It makes it possible.

Forty-six percent of interviewed students reported that family members (often spouses or children) also helped with housework and child care responsibilities:

I have a wonderful husband who pitches in wholeheartedly. On class days I don't get home till 8:00 or 8:30 at night, so he's responsible for the children after school, and homework and dance lessons and whatever happens on those days, and making dinner. That's a huge relief, that I have a spouse who is a willing and equal participant.

My husband is supporting me [by] not demanding housework. That means a lot to me, because he used to.

Our son helped watch his sister because she hasn't been comfortable staying home by herself if her father's not home. He comes home early sometimes so I can get to class on time without leaving her alone, or drives her over to my parents. It makes a huge difference when you're commuting to school.

Some families adapted to having a parent in school by doing homework at the same table or at the same time, as a form of family togetherness:

We're all in college, my husband, myself, and my two oldest kids, and the youngest one is in high school, so it's like a study hall here. We encourage each other by proofreading each other's papers, sharing time on the computer, talking about classes, talking over topics of interest for research projects, and supporting each other in that way.

My daughter thinks it's pretty awesome that I am in school. We no longer have a dining room table—we have a huge desk, and she has moved her laptop right next to mine. So we are often in the dining room working together. It's been a positive influence on her.

Thirty percent of students reported that family members assisted them with schoolwork. Some relied heavily on their family members for help with computer problems or Internet research, particularly if they had children five or older living in their households. Only seven percent of students with at least one child five or older reported needing skills to do online research, compared with 22 percent of students who did not have a child 5 or older (χ^2 (1) = 4.36, p<.05).

My older son will ask if I need any help with the computer, and he'll print out things that I need. If anything goes wrong with my computer, he'll fix it.

My daughter helped me learn how to do research online, and how to use the library component on the computer to connect with the school, and how to look up scholarly documents.

Many mentioned receiving help with writing—particularly those whose children had stronger English skills than their own:

Yesterday I had to read a paper on qualitative research, and it was hard for me to understand. So I read it out loud to my husband, because it helps me understand it better when I can hear myself.

My nieces and nephews help me finish my homework, and sometimes, because they speak it and write it very well, they correct me in my English.

Balancing Work, School, and Family Life

Although the students as a group felt supported by their families, they still struggled with balancing family, work and school demands. Many talked about being "tired," "overwhelmed," "always on the move," or "never able to give 100 percent to anything." Many could only find time to complete their assigned reading and papers by staying up very late at night, or rising earlier in the morning than other family members. Some had waited to attend school until their family responsibilities had decreased; as one student said, "If this were ten years ago, I probably couldn't do it." Nine percent of students reported reducing or adjusting their work hours to ease the stresses of work and schooling.

Sixty percent of the interviewed students talked about one or more ways in which they balanced family, work and school—for example, being realistic about the time it took to complete their work, staying well organized, setting priorities, and making time for family and relaxation:

I didn't understand why people had calendars, but I know now, they are lifesavers. I put everything in my datebook, and everything is like a clock. It takes me an hour to get to work, an hour to come home, an hour to cook dinner. I brainstorm things that I can cook for dinner throughout the week.

I do a lot of my homework at my job, during lunch. I still do homework at home, but just reading, not writing, so I can be in the same room with my kids and not yelling for them to be quiet.

I work through lunch to do as much of my homework as possible, so when I get home, I can spend a little more time with my husband and mom and dad. That's our quality time. For myself, I go to the gym. I do my homework when my husband's at work on the weekends; when he gets out, we spend time together.

I take a break on weekends. I have a "doing nothing day."

When I go to work, I focus on work. I do one thing. Then I come back home and get in touch with school. I just do my homework. And then when I need to stay with my son, then being around him is what I am doing.

Students were able to juggle in part because their families helped, but also because their family value system respected the sacrifices entailed in having an adult member attend school. A coping strategy mentioned by several students involved communicating clearly with children and other family members about the reason they were their attending school, and being straightforward about the changes and sacrifices it implied for the family's life together:

It's a team effort. My husband and children feel very connected. They're very proud that I'm in school. The children have been great through this whole thing and feel like they are getting a lot out of it too, when I talk about what I'm learning.

The way it balances is that sometimes I call in sick to work and I go out with my kids. It makes up for all those times that I had to miss things. Since my daughter can understand now, I'll tell her that I am in school and I have to do this. I tell her, "I want to make a better life for us." And understands. She got upset when I missed class.

Some students discussed the need to change their standards around housekeeping and school as a way to juggle their many responsibilities:

The house is not the same anymore, like before I was in school. But you have to let go of something.

School is important, and my goal is to complete it and learn from it, but the grades are not so critical. So if I spend a little less time on the assignment, and I can spend more time with family, it's okay.

Most interviewed students acknowledged that succeeding in school was only possible because of many forms of help. As one student said, "I am very lucky to have the support of my job, the staff I work with, and friends and family. It's a village. If I didn't have all of them, I wouldn't be able to do any of it."

Findings – Part II: The Institutions of Higher Education

We now turn to an in-depth look at three of the institutions operating these B.A. completion cohort programs for working adults. We were interested in learning from faculty members and administrators about the necessary conditions for establishing and implementing such a program, their assessments of the programs' success to date, lessons they had learned about helping this student population succeed in earning a four-year degree, and reflections on the programs' sustainability.

Program Development and Operations

External Financial and Professional Support

For all three institutions, county First 5 dollars were available to cover some or all of the program costs.[5] Without these funds, none of the three institutions would have been likely to establish the cohort programs included in this study. As one faculty member remarked, "If we weren't approached and told there's funding available, I don't know if we would have done what we did." A department/program chair observed, "The students have basically said, 'If the money wasn't there, we wouldn't come.' And we, unfortunately, are in a similar situation: if they didn't have the money, we would not be able to fund it for them."

The reasons why these institutions needed outside resources varied by auspice. For the public university—already facing an ever-increasing student population, and shrinking state revenues relative to operating expenses—the only viable way to launch such new programming was external funding to cover student fees and additional faculty costs. By contrast, private universities actively target new student populations, since tuition is their primary source of operating revenue, and low enrollment, fueled by rising tuition costs, has threatened their survival. The private for-profit institution in our study had already enrolled students in similar cohorts, including one partially supported by other First 5 funding, and it welcomed the availability of funds to establish another cohort. For the private nonprofit university, First 5 dollars made it possible to enter a new student market, creating an ECE workforce cohort for the first time.

In addition to student financial aid, the institutional players appreciated the other ways in which First 5 staff facilitated their programs. Respondents from all three institutions repeatedly mentioned how encouraging and helpful the key staff at First 5 or the local First 5-funded agency were in the development of the program, providing such supports as an off-campus location for classes or facilitating recruitment by convening potential students

Organizational and Personal Congruence

While outside resources for student financial aid and program costs were essential, they were insufficient for getting a cohort program up and running. Respondents at all three universities underscored the importance of a "good fit" between their institutional philosophy of education and objectives for community involvement, and First 5's objective of creating a cohort B.A. completion program for adults working in early care and education settings:

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[5] In 1998, California voters passed Proposition 10, adding a 50-cent-per-pack cigarette tax to create First 5 California (also known as the California Children and Families Commission), which funds education, health care, child care, and other programs related to children from birth through age five. First 5 California distributes 80 percent of these funds to the state's 58 counties, all of which have created local First 5 Commissions to address local needs. The amount of funding provided to each county First 5 Commission is based upon the area's birth rate.

It's the right target audience for us, and it's the right thing to do, but it's also part of the strategic overall plan to build and grow the university. There is a two-pronged approach here: interest in building the institution through an increased student body, but also in doing the right thing in helping the underserved and under-represented, which I think it is the basis of this field to a certain extent.

—PRESIDENT

It helps us in the community. I walked away the first day thinking, "Yeah, we all did the right thing." It was a powerful moment. We love to see these students; they are excited about learning.

—ASSOCIATE DEAN

We asked each of the interviewees how they came to be involved with the B.A. cohort program in their institution, and their motivations for doing so. Their answers revealed that the "good fit" involved not just the cohort program goals and their institutional philosophies, but their own personal and professional values as well. Even if they were initially approached because their particular function in the institution was related to this program—for example, student recruitment, assistance with enrollment, or instruction of relevant courses—their involvement and commitment to its success reflected a congruence between their own objectives and those of the program:

You don't spend too much time with these women without realizing you've made something really important happen for them. And that is just about as motivating as a thing can be. There are tons of people out there working in positions that serve young children who would like to improve their career opportunities by finishing their bachelor's degrees, but they can't afford it, they just can't access it. They have to work. It's like the parable of the couple walking on the beach: all the starfish are dead or dying, and one of them pitches one into the sea. The other one asks, "Why did you do that? Look at all of them. What does it matter?" "Well," says the first person, "it matters to that starfish." The way I looked at it was, [this program] would matter a lot to whoever might participate.

—DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM CHAIR

It's part of my job. But I also saw a need, and I wanted to meet the need. I got the distinct feeling that the program was one of quality. I interacted with faculty members from Child Development; I would hear from my colleagues on the admissions and recruitment side that this is a program that they put a lot of thought and planning into, and they had certain standards. That was exciting to me, to be able to offer a quality program that would make us look good in any number of ways, inside and outside of early childhood.

—ADMISSIONS OFFICER

The population of students I recognized to be extremely diligent and hardworking, trying to juggle a thousand different things, and anything I could do to help them succeed at their goal, I thought, was an intriguing opportunity. And then the class is one of my favorite courses to teach; it was the first opportunity to teach it to a class where everybody was from a similar profile, working full-time with kids and pursuing the same professional goals.

—FACULTY MEMBER

Institutional Leadership

Cohort programs for working adults can be challenging for institutions of higher education to implement, because they rarely fit the traditional college and university model. Classes are often held in the evenings or on weekends, and sometimes off-campus in other community locations. In some instances, new instructors must be recruited, particularly if current faculty members are unable or unwilling to change their schedules. There are also challenges in approving an appropriate course of study, and ensuring that it will meet the institution's academic standards.

At each of the three universities we studied, we heard about the critical importance of "buy-in" for the cohort program from people in a variety of job roles. But we also heard from each institution about one or more people who played pivotal leadership roles in shepherding the program from conception to implementation. There was at least one well-positioned person within each university who was able to broker the relationships that were key to the program's success.

At one university, a department chair described her own key role as "chief cook and bottle washer": "Every

aspect of the program is pretty much my creation—dreaming it up, working it out with the university, making it work for students, working with [First 5], name an aspect and I do it." Colleagues agreed, crediting the chair with the program's successful launch and operation, while also acknowledging other important players, such as faculty members who agreed to teach cohort classes in addition to their standard load, and particularly those who taught the first classes and, as one respondent said, "set the tone for the program."

At this particular institution, how easy or challenging was it to establish the cohort program? The answers to this question varied substantially by job role. From the instructors' point of view, it seemed relatively easy: "As far as I know," said one, "it was effortless. [X] is very detail-oriented, and mapped out the parameters, and it was off and running." The associate dean felt that establishing the B.A. cohort was "no more difficult than other programs. They all have their issues along the way. When you are recruiting students and taking a look at articulation issues, you always encounter institutional processes that are slow and cumbersome." But the department chair in the pivotal leadership role offered a different perspective:

It was an order of magnitude more difficult than even I could have imagined, and I am a pretty tenacious person, and clear about setting up systems and following through. I've worked at the university for quite some time, and I have a pretty good sense of what works and a sense of the students. I can tell you emphatically that if I had known three years ago what I now understand, I would have thought longer and harder about whether this was a reasonable drain on my personal time. And the university had no institutional wisdom about what they said they could do. Setting up a degree program is a whole other dance [than offering classes], and it's one they weren't prepared to offer. [The administration] says that as long as you figure out how to pay for this and it builds links with the community, we are happy to have you do this—no matter that they didn't really know how to do this.

At the second institution, which had a history of operating cohort degree programs for the ECE workforce in other communities, interviewees recognized the key role that the department chair and other on-campus faculty had initially played several years

before in designing and launching the programs. As one faculty member said, "The chair who started these programs had a vision for maintaining quality in off-campus programs." An admissions officer agreed:

I would have to credit the full-time faculty who designed the off-campus cohort program. They did such a good job to dot all the I's and cross all the T's, and put together something that would make the most sense for the working adult student. The product was well developed by the time I ever picked it up. I don't always have that luxury. The curriculum was put together with such good quality that once students begin, I think they see its value very quickly.

At this university, in addition to those responsible for the program's initial design, the program coordinator was viewed by all involved as key to its smooth and successful operation. The challenges in establishing the program were less about design and institutional buy-in than about student recruitment:

Establishing any cohort program can be very challenging because you need to find a group of people who all meet the qualifications for admission, who all want to start at the same time, and are willing to commit to and are comfortable with the same schedule—one or two nights a week, evening programs starting at 5:00. We're facing new competition, and that's hurting our growth.

—Admissions Officer

At the third and smallest institution, interviewees felt that everyone involved with the program was key to its successful launch—both the external support from First 5 and other community organizations, and the internal team effort. As one said, "There's a group of us, a wonderful, cooperative team." Another cited "lots of players who didn't balk at doing more work, because it was something new and exciting." Interviewees also mentioned the president's decision to financially underwrite the program, and the chair's skill and dedication:

We had a brand-new president who was gung-ho to do the initiative. The president created matching grants for people, so whatever they got from First 5 would be matched. And that was supportive right off the bat.

—Faculty Member

The department chair's dedication to making it successful has been huge. [X] is very supportive of making sure that students' needs are met, working with the adjunct faculty to make sure that students are learning what they need to learn.

—Program Coordinator

The chair, in turn, credited "the funding and the people who've put the energy into it," noting in particular the role of one member of the team responsible for community outreach who "has connections and makes and maintains them, doing most of the legwork in terms of getting the word out."

Institutional Capacity: Academic Expertise

Institutional capacity also played an important role in the development and design of these programs. Each institution called upon its history of operating similar programs or working with similar student populations, and the relevant expertise of its faculty.

As noted earlier, four-year colleges and universities have housed their early childhood-related majors, minors or specializations in a variety of departments with different missions. At the six programs included in this study, students will earn degrees bearing four different titles: Child Development; Child and Adolescent Development; Liberal Studies with a concentration in Child, Family, and Society; and Human Development with an Early Childhood emphasis and a Teacher Education minor. To some extent, these names reflect differences in subject matter covered, and the degree of emphasis on pedagogy and practical teaching skills.

Regardless of name, however, all the institutions seriously considered how to ensure that the cohort program offered an education comparable in content and quality to what students receive in their traditional on-campus programs:

This particular program is no different than the program we're offering on campus. The only difference is that somebody else is paying the students' costs, and it's being offered at a different time and in different blocks of time.

—Department/Program Chair

It's my biggest thrust to make sure that off-campus students are getting the same quality as on-campus. So, we're the course consultants, and then there's a content expert, and the content expert is one of the other faculty members, so there are two people who are in charge of every course, who are kind of checking back and forth and staying up-to-date with the content.

—Faculty Member

Of the three institutions we examined for this part of the study, one had a long history of preparing teachers of older children, and two had well-established on-campus academic programs with considerable focus on early childhood education. One of these offered a "strand" for Child Development students interested in the early childhood population, which enabled them to earn a Child Development Permit. Another had been offering similar cohorts in other communities for nearly a decade. The third institution attempted to initiate an early childhood emphasis decades ago, but could not attract sufficient numbers of students to keep it going. The faculty member associated with that early attempt remained at the institution, and along with another faculty member with an early childhood background, was called upon, and lent confidence to, the effort of designing an academic offering with an early childhood focus. As the program coordinator told us, "We had in-house people involved in our education program who had extensive early childhood backgrounds—both academic and practical experience—who were willing to teach in the program."

None of the institutions created new tenure-track positions or conducted a search for full-time faculty to teach in these programs, but some did hire adjunct faculty and/or provide professional development for existing faculty members. Depending on their backgrounds and their job roles, some faculty members encountered the need to update or build new skills to work effectively with this student population. As one said:

I'm learning as much as they are right now. I'm actually doing research right now on early childhood and brain development, just because I'm teaching in this program. I like to focus it on what [students] are doing and make it relevant to their work. So for me, yes, absolutely, to take some classes or seminars on [such] current issues would be fabulous.

One of the universities conducted intensive training sessions for program faculty at least twice a year as part of their effort to ensure that they were thoroughly up-to-date on early childhood issues. At another institution, the chair spoke about how the addition of early childhood students led faculty members to reassess their expertise:

Having those students in our midst has certainly raised awareness about having to create the courses and find people to teach them. I think they've had to examine what they know and don't know. They are learning more about how important it is to work with young children.

While all of the institutional representatives were proud of the course of study offered in their B.A. cohort programs, there are no external requirements about program content, nor is there any independent assessment of programs' rigor, focus or quality. Classes for students at some institutions focus exclusively on children from birth to age five, while at others, as one interviewee said, courses are designed so that "about half of our class time over the course of a semester is spent on children birth to five, the rest on older children." In at least one of the institutions focusing on the wider age range, faculty members do not consider themselves to be offering an early childhood teacher preparation program per se, as the different degree and department titles suggest:

Early Childhood was in Home Economics for many years, but in the late 1980s, Child Development was included in the School of Education. We have two paths for a degree: one for those interested in K-12 teaching, and one for standard child development, without the subject matter preparation required for a multiple subjects credential. Those with an early childhood focus can pick particular courses and, through advisement, take classes related to their career goals. But this is not an early childhood education program.

—Department/Program Chair

It is unclear how these differences play out in terms of program rigor, or whether the graduates of any particular institution become more effective teachers or practitioners. In future years of this study, we hope to study how institutions assess students' competencies as practitioners. Only one of the institutions in the study is seeking national accreditation, and although that institution sees it as valuable, the other institutions question its relevance or value. We also hope to examine the content of the courses of study more closely, as the lack of uniformity in program content, specialization and intensity of field experience contributes to the lack of agreement in the ECE research literature about the value of B.A.-level education (Early et al., 2007; Whitebook, 2005).

[The NCATE accreditation process][6] has pushed us to make wonderful changes. So we added the writing class, we added a two-unit assessment and an early childhood class, and we added a practicum to our special education class, so that anybody starting in Fall 2008 or later has to spend time in a special education classroom.

—Program Coordinator

We looked at early childhood accreditation and decided not to go for it now, mostly because I'd say that 100 percent of the students we have enrolled in the B.A. completion program have already been to an early childhood training program [at the community college level]. And they came in with a Child Development Permit. So there was really no need that we could see to do that. It's not advantageous. There's no carrot that says, if you do this, something wonderful will happen for your students.

—Faculty Member

Early childhood accreditation is not really appropriate for our program, because we focus on infancy through adolescence. Our program gives students a lot more flexibility in terms of the kinds of things they might want to pursue. I think it gives them a very good idea of what their job options are, and they understand the expectations for kindergarten and older children, too.

—Department/Program Chair

[6]The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), founded in 1954, is the professional accrediting organization for schools, colleges, and departments of education in the United States. As of 2008, it accredits 632 colleges of education, with nearly 100 more seeking NCATE accreditation.

Institutional Capacity: Meeting the Needs of the Student Population

In addition to early childhood expertise within their ranks, institutions relied on their familiarity with nontraditional student populations to help them craft a program that would be supportive and accessible to the early childhood educators they sought to attract. At all three institutions, there was a willingness to design a program at a location and time that would meet student needs. Each university also continued to learn more about this student population, and all were making accommodations to their programs as they went along.

As we have seen, the student populations of these cohort programs—like those of most higher education programs in California and nationwide—are quite diverse. In light of this, interviewees generally recognized the importance and the challenge of increasing the diversity of their faculty. We asked them whether faculty members' linguistic and cultural backgrounds reflected those of the students. One faculty member responded, "Not sufficiently, in the sense that the students are primarily Latinos. As part of our philosophy, we put significant emphasis on diversity and an appreciation for it, but no, I don't think we have as good a reflection [of student diversity] as we could or should have." A program coordinator answered, "I think we do have cultural awareness, but there's no substitute for having people who are of the students' culture." One interviewee noted that her institution was intentionally diversifying its faculty, sometimes by recruiting its own graduates: "We certainly have many women of color teaching for us. We really like it when we can pull students whom we really see as having great potential from our own master's program."

Community Connections

The relationships between local First 5 (and First 5-funded) organizations and these three universities served as catalysts for program development in terms of providing operational funds and helping to publicize the cohort programs in the community. In addition to First 5, other community partners contributed by providing space and/or personnel, or in helping to create a smooth transition for students. Interviewees from each university mentioned particular community members or organizations that provided critical information about the ECE field, which helped the institution tailor its programs to community demand. Relationships with community colleges were cited most frequently:

> I meet with [community college] faculty and describe the program. We target counselors who work with early childhood students and let them know about the program, too. We want to make sure that they are aware of how their programs articulate with ours. We actually house our advisors there once a week, and make appointments as needed. We do outreach to the students. We go into the Child Development classes and speak to them. If they have special projects, like a conference, they often invite us to do a workshop. Our program is not a stand-alone program. The off-campus program could not be offered if we didn't have community colleges in the area offering what we don't offer.
>
> —ADMISSIONS OFFICER

Forging relationships between cohort programs and community colleges appears to be mutually beneficial in terms of community relations, sharing faculty and space, and limiting tuition costs for students, as reflected in the comments of a university president:

> The beauty of working with these community colleges is that they're giving me the space virtually for nothing, because they're seeing it as a community service. So we've really been able to work together in partnership. My facilities costs are almost zero. And their instructors love teaching in our courses because I'm paying them a higher adjunct wage, and they're also getting experience teaching at a senior-level university. They get that over and above their salaries, and then there are students who come here only for 40 final credit hours,[7] so we're very cost-competitive.

Midway Assessments

In each interview, we asked respondents how they thought the cohort program was going thus far. Across institutions, they were enthusiastic about the students and the ability of their universities to provide a meaningful educational experience for them. Initial responses to the question were "great," "absolutely meeting our goals," "our attrition rate is zero,"

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[7] Traditionally, students transfer to a four-year institution with 60 lower-division units. Some community colleges and four-year institutions are experimenting with a so-called "80-40 program," in which students complete only 40 units at the four-year institution, but receive 20 upper-division units in courses offered at the community college, at the regular community college tuition rate.

and the like. Largely reflecting the role of the person being interviewed, more in-depth reflections on this question focused on different aspects of student experiences and program operations. Those whose responsibilities involved overall program coordination focused on whether students were receiving the support they needed in order to succeed in the program:

My goal was to find a group of people who wanted to do this, and try to make it happen for them—and we're doing that now. I have no control over whether these individuals will be able to sustain their participation. But what I do is make sure that any institutional barrier that comes up in front of them will not impede their progress or kill off their motivation because they can't figure it out. From that perspective, [the students] are, for the most part, pretty happy.

—Department/Program Chair

My sense is that it's going very well. I think there have been some bumps, whether it be the amount of work that students are having to accomplish, financial costs, managing their time between work and school, expectations of what was going to be required, or dealing with the course load.

—Program Coordinator

The feedback I've been getting from the students, through course evaluations or teacher evaluations, is positive by and large. We've had to be careful about scheduling for them, knowing their working hours, so that's part of the feedback. I would say it's going well.

—Department/Program Chair

Faculty members involved in teaching classes focused on the learning taking place, and some mentioned how much they enjoyed working with the cohort students:

I think it's thriving. For the most part, the students seem to be happy, and certainly the faculty is enjoying teaching them. It may be one of my favorite classes to have taught in 20 years here. It's the receptivity of the students, their willingness to jump in and ask all kinds of critical questions. They were so earnest and eager and willing to revise stuff, eager for feedback. They were dream students, very serious about responsibilities. Just a joy. You didn't feel like you were coercing them to sit there when they would much rather do something else.

I'm 99-percent certain that we will graduate 20 if not all of them, so I think it's going really well. It's not easy, and they're learning that it's not easy. It's challenging, but they're definitely claiming their education, learning it's not about sitting idly by and regurgitating information. They're learning how important what they do is to these kids and to society in the future. And it's amazing to watch this change for these students, who have felt what I feel—that [working with young children] is a totally undervalued profession. They start to see how valid it is, and how much of a difference they make in the future, and that changes their perspective and the way they work with kids

Lessons Learned: Key Elements of Student Success

We also asked interviewees about the supports and services that working adult students needed to succeed in learning and completing their degrees. They identified the following seven elements, similar to what others have written on this subject (Dukakis, Bellm, Seer & Lee, 2007) and largely mirroring what the students themselves cited, as described in the first section of this report:

1) the quality of the cohort experience itself;

2) financial assistance;

3) flexible scheduling and location of classes;

4) academic readiness and writing support;

5) technological support;

6) comprehensive academic advising, encouragement and support; and

7) supportive employers and coworkers.

The Cohort Experience

Everyone with whom we spoke recognized the critical role of the cohort itself in providing academic and emotional support to its participants. They were aware of how cohort members relied on one another in managing academic, professional and personal barriers. As one faculty member said, "It's a very caring community of learners, and they really help each other out—they know each other well." Two faculty members: commented:

It's opened up more as we've gone along, and [students] support each other. There have been some really good discussions—I think that a few were previously "set in their ways."

A cohort is a dynamic process that really makes a difference, different than students who just show up for classes.

Financial Assistance

Everyone with whom we spoke acknowledged the vital importance of financial assistance to the success of these programs, recognizing that most students working in the early care and education field simply could not afford to attend college without it. "Clearly," as one department/program chair said, "a lack of financial support would be a deal breaker, because the students couldn't afford to do this." Especially at the private institutions, staff members expressed concern about the debt that students were incurring. One admissions officer noted, "The students are going into debt even though they qualify for Pell Grants, because their salaries are so low."

Recognizing this, some mentioned the importance of providing accurate information about loans and financial planning, in addition to the financial assistance itself:

You have to let them know that financial aid is available, but you can get students in trouble if you say only a little and don't know as much as you should. At times we send a financial aid person to information meetings so that they can answer students' questions themselves.

—Faculty Member

Flexible Scheduling and Location

Interviewees agreed that accessibility for working students included both the scheduling and the location of classes. All three institutions offered cohort classes off-campus, at either a community agency or community college, because they recognized that their main campuses were either inconvenient due to traffic or parking, or were a long commute from where most students lived and worked.

We've learned it's important for the program to be flexible, in the sense of geography and times to meet. For this particular program, we obviously have to offer the courses either in the evening or on the weekends because of work schedules.

—Department/Program Chair

We're seeing more and more of these programs starting at community colleges, which are wonderful for the students—they're already familiar with it.

—President

One university made the effort to secure a site that would be welcoming and comfortable for adults putting in long hours after work to attend school:

The place where the class meets is a wonderful building about a five- or ten-minute drive from campus, with a kitchen and comfortable furniture, a very supportive staff, and parking. We basically have the building to ourselves in the evening, because most of the staff are gone.

—Faculty Member

Academic Readiness and Writing Support

In all three institutions, staff expressed two types of concern about students' academic readiness for upper-division study. First, they spoke about students having completed enough units to transfer, but not necessarily having all of the right units to qualify for upper-division status. As one department/program chair said, "The students weren't transfer-ready, and that soaked up a ton of time."

Institutions varied about whether students could begin the program before they technically qualified for upper-division status, but the problem led all three institutions to work more closely on issues of articulation with the feeder community colleges. As one department/program chair said, "We've always had a rough transferability agreement about courses. But now we have specific agreements in every subject area we're offering."

Second, all three institutions grappled with how to help students, even those who were transfer-ready, to achieve college-level writing skills in English. Interviewees reported that while every cohort included students with adequate or good writing skills, each also had a

significant portion of native and non-native English speakers who struggled to express themselves in writing:

Many students are anxious about writing, and they know that they might not write at the level of most college students. But the faculty really expect these women to do so while they're in the program, and many of them don't come to us with those skills.

—ADMISSIONS OFFICER

Two years into the program, writing is an unmitigated challenge for four of the students. It's a serious problem.

—DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM CHAIR

Instructors have found themselves providing more writing support than was their common practice, and two of the institutions have adapted their application process by requiring a writing sample, as well as changing their course of study to address these issues, either by adding a writing class or paying greater attention to writing in subject matter classes:

Their writing skills are very poor. We had to change the curriculum in the second quarter, and put in a writing class. Even then, we're telling all of our instructors, "Do everything you can to help them with their writing."

—PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Included in our admission process now, they have to give us a writing sample. When scoring these, we've had some discussion about who might need remediation to bring them to where they need to be. Often it's the English language learners, and we know that with help we can get them there. But when we look at the native English speakers who can't write, we think that these are really the tough ones.

—FACULTY MEMBER

While cohort students theoretically can make use of the tutoring services that are available to all students on campus, being located off-site can make accessing these services difficult or impossible:

Immediate support would be really helpful, in the form of tutoring. While we have this available online, it would be even more useful to have a place where students could go with their papers.

—FACULTY MEMBER

I definitely think that there needs to be tutoring in place, such as writing labs. This is something that I'm ending up doing in my spare time, which isn't very much.

—PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Technological Support

In today's college and university settings, numerous academic functions require technological know-how, including accessing library materials online, conducting online searches, communicating electronically with instructors and other students, and enrolling and registering for classes. But many working adult students find these technological expectations a daunting aspect of the school experience, especially those who do not have an up-to-date computer at home with a high-speed Internet connection, whose jobs do not require extensive computer use, or who have not received any relevant computer training. Our interviewees frequently mentioned these challenges:

Technology gets overlooked sometimes, but it is something absolutely critical that has arisen in the whole educational environment.

—DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM CHAIR

Many of the students are low-income. They don't have computers at home, which makes it more difficult for them. Sometimes they're doing this at their job, staying after work to do their homework.

—PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Theoretically the institution is easier to deal with now, but it takes a savvy that many of the older students don't have. They aren't "bilingual" with technology.

—FACULTY MEMBER

Technical support has been helpful to them. Even little things like, "I can't use my flash drive." For older working adults who are making the transition to a technologically savvy environment, it is helpful to have those supports.

—FACULTY MEMBER

It would be wonderful if we could somehow help them with technology before they start the program, so they're not trying to learn it as they go. That's just so hard for them.

—FACULTY MEMBER

The universities' online communication systems, such as Blackboard—while theoretically a helpful and convenient way for students and instructors to reach each other—have stymied many of the cohort participants. At least one faculty member expressed awareness that faculty, too, needed training in how to use such tools and how to assist the students with them:

The students are saying they need help, and part of the reason they are saying so is because the faculty don't know how to use [Blackboard], either.

—Faculty Member

Comprehensive Academic Advising, Encouragement and Support

Administrators and faculty of the cohort programs recognized that students needed several kinds of personal support, including academic advising, encouragement to continue their studies, and assistance with negotiating university bureaucracy. Respondents talked about the importance of providing easily accessible, personal, frequent, and multi-faceted support related to all facets of student life. Administrators appeared to understand the importance of a clearly identified person or persons who could help students navigate logistical barriers:

They need one-on-one relationships, not only with their instructors but also with people in admissions and counseling. They need someone they can call for information, who's going to be responsive to them. They don't want to stand in line or be shuffled from department to department. They don't necessarily want to be sent to a web site and expected to find what they need. They're busy. They need someone they can call, and need to see that person as someone who wants to talk to them. They need to feel that they're valued, that we appreciate and understand them, that we know something about them personally and reflect that in our dealings with them. That, I think, is absolutely the most critical thing to their success, besides having a program that can be done at night or on the weekend.

—Admissions Officer

We have a very available advising function. The students cannot get away from their advisor around here, whereas they come to us and say, "I went to such-and-such a school for three years and never met my advisor." Here, they have to see us at least once a quarter in order to get registered for the next quarter. We're more than willing to provide that kind of support.

—Department/Program Chair

Several respondents mentioned that cohort participants showed a need for encouragement about participating in the program and being able to complete it, and they talked about intentionally providing this type of support.

The other kind of support that comes to mind for these students is validation: for us to be able to say, "You can do this, after some years of being out of school. We've been in this business for a long time, and we can tell you, you can do this."

—Department/Program Chair

There needs to be kind of a re-acculturation, that it's worth it to take some time away from your families and friends one or two nights a week to go to class— that it's worth it to spend lots of weekends doing homework. They have to understand that spending time on themselves is not necessarily selfish; they're not sacrificing their family, and it's not forever.

—Admissions Officer

Some faculty members have also worked on helping students recognize their professional knowledge and expertise as ECE practitioners:

There does seem to be a high expectation [among these students] that regardless of what class they take, it ought to be directly relevant to early childhood education; they want to know how it is going to apply to their jobs. So if we're talking about a particular theory of learning or theory of cognition, I'll say to students, okay, in your work setting, how do you see this reflected in what you're doing? We encourage them to use their experience. This is one of the huge advantages of a working adult degree completion program.

—Faculty Member

The field is changing, and they've really had to reorient themselves and begin to look at themselves differently, in order to make the step into a bachelor's degree completion program. They see themselves as competent professionals, and they certainly are. They have been working with children for many years. And they're comfortable with the community college system, because it's a place where they've always gone. But they never saw themselves as transfer students or bachelor's degree students.

—Admissions Officer

Supportive Employers and Coworkers

When working with undergraduates who are engaged in pre-service education, a college or university usually has little or no interaction with local employers. But the respondents noted that offering a cohort program for working adults requires institutions to be more directly engaged with ECE employers, seeking their cooperation in facilitating field placements and engaging in discussions with them about their goals for, and satisfaction with, student learning::

We are really specific about the duties of the program site director and the mentor teacher. The university faculty member goes to visit regularly. It's a triad. We work together.

—Program Coordinator

We are trying to give students the broader view but also specifics, like how to complete a Desired Results assessment. When you are looking at the efficacy of a program, sometimes I hear employers say that their teachers have gotten the degree but "they're not doing what I need them to do." We are trying to be mindful of what people need in the field, without being so specific that we can't generalize. We try to balance the students' needs and the needs of the community.

—Faculty Member

The field placement or practicum presents various challenges to students working full-time. As one faculty member observed, "The dispositions of the people involved in other parts of their world are important. They need flexibility not just at the academic institution, but at the worksite, too. Some students have been well-supported by their employ-

ers, while others were panicked when it came time to arrange their field placements." One of the issues has been the worksites' ability to allow students to switch to other classrooms or age groups for part of the placement, in order to broaden their experience. As a result, the institutions have had to be creative and proactive in facilitating fieldwork placements, whether at students' own worksites or elsewhere:

This is the first quarter that the practicum has been a real problem; there is one person who has an administrator who doesn't want any switching, doesn't want to do any release time, so I need to work with her. At another site, students haven't been able to switch as much as we thought they were going to be able to, and so we have decided to have an administrator's tea, and invite the directors and ask what would it take for release time. Do we need to provide a substitute? How can we work that out? What is the benefit to you or your site if this person is doing this kind of work? We ask the administrators how we can work on this. We probably should have done this earlier, but the program got going pretty fast.

—Program Coordinator

The students have been switching sites or within their agency, so they've been with other age groups, but we wanted them to have an intern experience all the way up through school age. It's just not working that way, and so I've included some texts; then they have to observe, and write what they're seeing with regard to the text. The students have expressed to me in their writing that it's been beneficial even to have the chance to observe in their own classrooms, because they don't have that opportunity routinely, to let somebody else be in charge while they observe the children.

—Faculty Member

Several interviewees mentioned that additional funding was needed, either to allow students to work fewer hours or to pay for substitutes while students participate in the practicum:

There are students coming through Head Start programs where the program itself is really supportive. They're paying for release time. But in

other child care programs, the directors are not that flexible, and those students are having a much harder time. So we're thinking there has to be more of a partnership with the other employers.

—FACULTY MEMBER

One university, whose policy is for students to complete their fieldwork at an approved site other than their own workplace, has encountered additional challenges:

We believe firmly in demonstrating what you have learned. And so almost all of our classes have either a fieldwork or a practicum component. We are mindful that people are coming in who have a lot of experience behind them. So we have a formula to reduce some of the supervised fieldwork [requirement] when they get to that specific class. But nonetheless, just because you've done [a certain kind of work] doesn't mean you're doing it [well]. That is one of the biggest challenges, because getting that time off is extremely difficult for some students. We do allow them to complete the hours at their own workplace if—here's the big caveat—they're working with a population they don't typically work with. And all of them have to have a mentor teacher. They need release time if they're working full-time. That's what's needed.

—PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Program Sustainability: The Future of the B.A. Cohorts

We were interested in learning how the institutional stakeholders viewed the future of the B.A. cohort programs; namely, whether they saw their efforts as a one-time or short-term experiment, or were planning to incorporate cohort programs into their ongoing offerings.

We began this part of our discussion by asking them their understanding of First 5's commitment to the effort. Responses varied by role. Faculty members, unless they were actively involved in program coordination, knew little about the amount, duration, or content of the First 5 funding. By contrast, the administrators and coordinators understood that First 5 funds were intended as a "catalyst," and were committed through the life of the existing cohort or cohorts, but could not be counted on as an ongoing source of support for tuition or program operations. These assessments of First 5's role were made without rancor; on the contrary, interviewees viewed their local First 5 agencies as "reliable" and "reasonable" partners, whose "creativity" and "entrepreneurial" sensibility had been important in getting their programs off the ground. Recognizing that First 5 dollars were not a "source of continuous funding," and in the case of one institution, were considered a "one-shot, one-time" event, those we spoke to were sanguine about the continuation of their programs in the absence of money for student aid and for additional classes. We posed three questions to ascertain how the institutions were approaching the future of these programs.

First, we asked a hypothetical question: "If First 5 funding stopped at the end of the current semester, would the university consider sustaining the program?"

In response, most interviewees thought their institution would try to do something to assist the current cohort students in completing their degrees. At one institution, while a faculty member stated, "I have no idea," and the department chair was adamant that "the university would not pick up the loss of funding," an administrator said, "The university would be committed to finishing up the cohort, in some fashion, if the bottom fell out. But after that, I am not sure how the finances would work. You have to take care of the students that you contracted with, to get their degree."

In the institution with a longer history of operating cohorts, the admissions officer mused,

It would put us back to where we used to be, when there were no First 5 funds. It would make our job a little harder, because students wouldn't have this extra pot of money. It might result in fewer prospective students.

A faculty member at the same institution answered, "I'm sure that we could advocate with the administration that somehow we need to scholarship them for their remainder; we would certainly make that plea." The coordinator reiterated this commitment, saying,

Regardless of funding, I do want to say that once students start, we never pull out, ever, ever, ever. We will put students on directed study if necessary. We have such a strong commitment to our students.

At another institution, the department chair agreed that an effort would be made to continue supporting the students:

To his credit, our president, when he was asked, "Are we going to do this again for these students next year?"—and he's looking at a very, very dire budget situation—said, "We cannot not do it for them. We have to." I think what he's realizing is, we want to do what we can for students who are getting just pitiful income for what they do. I asked, "Are we going to be involved in this scholarship program again?" And he said, "Yes."

Second, we asked whether any additional fundraising was occurring within the institution to support the B.A. cohort program. Although interviewees at all three institutions knew it was likely that First 5 funds would not be continuous, only the private nonprofit institution, which had been offering tuition reductions in addition to the First 5 funds, was actively seeking grant funds to continue the cohort program. The private for-profit university had "entertained reducing the amount of tuition, to be competitive," in the words of one interviewee, but in the end did not do so:

We've never had the infrastructure to go out and build funding streams for our students, to build relationships to get grants on our own. We might get research grants, or seed money to write a curriculum or to give someone leave time. I am not aware of any infrastructure in place to go out and look for additional funds.
—Program Coordinator

Third, we asked whether stakeholders within the universities were discussing how the program could be made permanent. At the public university, there had been no fundraising or discussions about long-term strategy, in part because there was no decision at the departmental level to start another cohort, even if funds became available. At the private institutions, there appeared to be some discussion about the desire to continue the cohort programs, but no clear-cut strategy for how to do so:

I have tried to have some of those discussions. I've stated to senior management, "We need a way to sustain ourselves." And this [First 5 funding] isn't going to happen forever, and there's going to be

competition coming in to the marketplace, which we've certainly seen. And there seems to be some fleeting interest in what we can do, but we tend, as an institution, to not pick up the ball.
—Admissions Officer

I'm on the budget committee here, kind of a governance advisory board, and we are talking constantly about how we can continue these programs with funding, what sources we can go to, what grants are available. We've talked about a number of different foundations, but there's not a broad base we can appeal to.
—Program Coordinator

Yes, we would try. What I see would happen is that only the students who could afford it would be able to come here, with their own ways of finding loans or scholarships. We would not put money into recruiting students, money that we didn't have.
—Department/Program Chair

Beyond the Institutions

In addition to answering our questions, many interviewees raised larger social issues that impacted their institutions and the B.A. cohort programs. At all three institutions, respondents questioned the likelihood of cohort students remaining in the field, given the low status and poor pay of early care and education jobs. They recognized that the educational process was opening up broader options to the students, and in some ways, they were encouraging them to pursue these:

They're not quite positive they will stay in the classroom, because they are now managing to complete their degrees and they are exploring what might be beyond that. We are opening up different horizons, and they are open to exploring whether [that might mean] working with children in some new capacity.
—Faculty Member

I'm seeing students who are ready to go into a credential program, because they define themselves now as successful students, and want a higher degree. But they want to make some money. They want a job with benefits. And they typically make really great teachers.

—Faculty Member

While recognizing that students completing their programs may seek employment working with older children because of the low pay in most ECE settings, respondents at both of the private institutions questioned the viability of teacher education in general, because of the unstable teaching job market and the costs of higher education:

We are seeing a drop in our teacher education, for the first time in the 20 years that I've been here. The students are nervous. They have said, "We're going to get through this and not have a job. We're going to have to go out of state. We're going to have to go someplace else." It should make us nervous.

—Faculty Member

It'll be really interesting to see how politicians and people like that who fund First 5 think about these programs. If within ten years there is nobody who went to [a First 5-funded B.A. cohort program] who's even in the field any more, because they've gone on and own their own business now because they have these skills, and so on, does that mean that First 5 failed? Absolutely not. What it means for public policy is that if we'd invest in more of these individuals at this level, what potential they would have!

—President

:

Discussion and Conclusion

This report reflects the first year of a multi-year effort to examine B.A. completion cohort programs in early care and education in four California counties. The six programs under investigation were developed with similar goals:

1. To increase and retain a pool of B.A.-level professionals in the ECE field with culturally, linguistically, and professionally diverse backgrounds;

2. To invest in institutional change at colleges and universities in order to expand their capacity to provide appropriate and accessible B.A. programs for ECE practitioners; and

3. To assure that degree recipients are able to demonstrate and articulate professional competencies that are appropriate to the degree obtained.

During the first year of this study, we focused primarily on the following questions:

- Are such programs an effective strategy to help working adults in ECE access and succeed in higher education?

- What is the impact of the cohort experience on students' professional practice?

- Can institutions of higher education, with sufficient support, create and maintain such programs successfully?

To investigate these matters initially, the study team sought out the perspectives of the students themselves, and of key representatives of three institutions of higher education, about the cohort program experience.

1. *Are B.A. completion cohort programs an effective strategy to help working adults in ECE access and succeed in higher education?*

From both groups of interview subjects, we heard a resoundingly positive message about the success of these programs. Students generally felt a strong sense of achievement, expressing confidence in their ability to complete their degrees. All of the students acknowledged that the unique features of their cohort programs facilitated their experience, and the vast majority expressed appreciation of the financial and other forms of support built into the program design. Most students, including those who had previously attempted to complete a degree, felt that the current program design addressed many of the challenges that had previously impeded their academic progress. The students' comments reflected remarkable dedication to their academic goals, and resilience in balancing the demands of school, work, and home life.

For their part, the higher education administrators and faculty members showed creativity and flexibility in adapting their offerings to a student cohort structure, or even developing new program models, with the support of local First 5 dollars. They, too, expressed confidence in their programs thus far, noting the students' staying power, satisfaction, and dedication to their studies.

Five Critical Areas of Student Support

We also found a striking congruence between the student and institutional perspectives not only on the aspects of these programs that were working well, but also on what kinds of adjustments or improvements were still needed. Further, across the six cohorts, students strongly agreed in terms of what they valued most about these B.A. completion programs—an assessment quite similar to what previous research has shown about working adults attending higher education, not only in the ECE field. Research examining the success of working adults in accessing and succeeding in degree programs has identified five critical features of the higher education experience for this population: cohorts or learning communities, financial support, access-based support, advising and counseling, and skill-based support (Dukakis et al., 2007).

The six institutions, to varying degrees, intentionally designed their programs with these five features in mind, and these features kept emerging in our interviews as critical for success, as judged by stu-

dents, administrators, and faculty members alike. Yet such programs may appear rather costly in comparison to other higher education models that offer fewer student support services. Considering the budget constraints now affecting most institutions of higher education, it is appropriate to ask whether some of these features could be reduced or eliminated without compromising the overall educational experience, or jeopardizing students' success in earning degrees.

Because this study was not a naturalistic experiment comparing program models, we cannot answer such a question directly. Based on what we have learned to date from cohort students and institutional representatives, however, these program features appear to function like interlocking puzzle pieces, with the absence of any single feature potentially leaving a gaping hole in students' ability to earn degrees.

Flexibility in the scheduling and location of classes ("access-based support") was critical to these students, for example. The timing of classes in the evenings and on weekends, coupled in some cases with more convenient locations, made it possible for students working a full-time weekday schedule to participate. Similarly, significant financial support allowed many of the students to take part in a college degree program that would have otherwise been cost-prohibitive, particularly in light of generally very low salaries in the ECE field, other pressing family needs, and the current inflationary economy. Advising and counseling, likewise, appeared to be a necessity for these students to participate in a B.A. completion program, particularly related to transcript evaluation to ensure transfer-ready status, information about courses that would or would not be counted toward a degree, and advice about additional coursework needed to achieve a degree or meet certification requirements—all of which can have significant cost implications. The scope of such issues as transcript review, and articulation between institutions of higher education, goes well beyond these individual cohort efforts, of course, but at present, they result in pressing needs among these cohort students for educational and career advisement.

Ideally, skill-based supports would not be such a necessity if most students advancing to higher levels of education already met certain academic standards. But this is not the case for many who have been educated in American schools and colleges, as evidenced by widely recognized achievement gaps not only between U.S.

students from different ethnic and economic groups but between U.S. students and those in other countries (Baker, Griffin, & Choi, 2008). Student difficulties with writing at the college level are a widely acknowledged problem throughout the country, sometimes requiring institutions to increase their writing requirements or requiring faculty to address student writing skills along with the academic content they were hired to teach (Brocato, Furr, Henderson, & Horton, 2005; "Professor X," 2008). Student cohort members, as well as administrators and faculty members, cited academic writing as the students' strongest area of need for additional assistance, and both groups agreed that students needed more, not less, formal assistance in this area.

In addition, students in the San Francisco State University cohort, a unique dual-language (Spanish-English) program, strongly affirmed the value and success of this model as a way to build the skills of early childhood educators in cultural competency and in communicating effectively with children and parents in languages other than English—yet over one-half felt the need for additional assistance related to taking classes in two languages.

Both the students and the institutional representatives recognized that the multifaceted cohort structure was an essential part of the programs' success to date. From a purely administrative viewpoint, bringing a certain number of students together to take classes at an appointed time and place makes good business sense. But our interviewees, as well as researchers studying other cohort education efforts (Imel, 2002), have located such programs' success less in their form than in the process by which they stimulate and support affective and cognitive learning. These include:

- reducing isolation;
- creating opportunities to understand past and current teaching experiences through consistent discussion in a positive, known environment;
- building a sense of belonging;
- establishing a vehicle for focusing on learning strategies and study skills; and
- giving students an opportunity to help each other navigate academic and personal challenges.

For many of the students we interviewed, the cohort provided the opportunity for critical reflection about their work with children, an element that is often identified as central to effective teaching, but one that is not sufficiently incorporated into most ECE students' educational experiences or work environments (Shulman & Carey, 2004).

Those who study and seek to identify high quality in early care and education programs have often noted that "good things go together." Better programs typically employ better trained and compensated teachers, experience less teacher turnover, place a high value on being culturally as well as developmentally appropriate, and strive to address a broad range of family needs, including hiring staff who speak the languages of the children and families and are knowledgeable about their cultures. The absence of any one element undermines the total effect. Based on this first-year assessment, "good things go together" also seems to be a fitting rule of thumb for degree completion programs for adults working in early care and education: their success, in the opinion of those who operate and participate in the programs, appears to depend upon the full complement of elements identified here.

Yet questions remain about the particular aspects of these supports that are most critical to students' success in completing their degrees. In future years of this study, we will learn whether or not students in these programs earned degrees at higher-than-average rate for students in their respective institutions. We will also explore promising practices that emerge from these programs with regard to offering various supports most efficiently and successfully. All of the institutions, for example, recognized that offering classes off-campus, while convenient in many ways, also limited the cohort students' access to on-campus tutoring and technological support. We will explore how institutions address this issue, as well as their use of online resources.

Further, we will investigate the extent to which these institutions of higher education intentionally created a mutually supportive, learning community atmosphere in these student cohorts, and to what extent this was the result of the student's own initiative, once they were placed together. And since tensions, along with collegial relationships, can also form over time within a close-knit cohort of students, we will investigate what instructors and institutions do to mitigate these. The ways in which different insti-

tutions address such issues could provide essential information to others establishing similar programs.

In addition to confirming previous research findings about higher education cohort programs for "nontraditional" students, this study identified another important issue to consider in future planning of such programs in the ECE field. Students reported that support and encouragement from their family members were critical to their ability to juggle the demands of family, work and school. While institutions of higher education should not be expected to provide family counseling or to intervene in students' personal decision making, assessing students' readiness to succeed in B.A. completion programs might well include urging them to reflect on the level of familial support available to them. Further, we learned that students need support, flexibility, and buy-in from their ECE employers, as discussed in more detail below.

2. *What is the impact of the cohort experience on students' professional practice?*

Public policies requiring early childhood educators to earn bachelor's degrees, as well as programs created to help them earn such degrees, rest on the assumption that additional education will improve teachers' practice and lead to better outcomes for young children. This first-year investigation was limited to obtaining the cohort students' own perceptions of the impact that this educational experience had had on their classroom practice. While their self-assessments were promising—namely, that their practice had improved noticeably in relation to curriculum and instruction, and to their interactions with children, colleagues and parents—these claims warrant confirmation through observational study. The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment hopes to launch in the near future such an observational study of the relationship between ECE teacher preparation programs and classroom practice.

Meanwhile, significant research evidence has indeed supported the rationale for raising ECE teacher qualifications, as studies of a number of early childhood and preschool programs have demonstrated short- and long-term gains for children in classrooms whose teachers hold degrees and/or certification in early childhood education (Bogard, Traylor, & Takanishi, 2008). Recently, however, the strength of the relationship between child outcomes and

the B.A. degree has come into question (Early et al, 2007). Yet the research review undertaken by Early and her colleagues failed to take into account certain key contextual variables shown to influence teacher behavior—in particular, the workplace climate, which includes teacher turnover as well as the educational backgrounds of the director and of one's fellow teachers (Whitebook & Sakai, 2004). As the authors themselves acknowledged, their study also fell short in examining enormous variations among ECE teacher preparation programs in quality, requirements, and appropriateness for early childhood settings, pointing to the need for further research (Early et al., 2008).

Beginning to tease apart the critical elements of effective ECE teacher education programs will be the focus of our investigation in the coming years of this study. In particular, we are interested in learning more about how to assess differences across institutions in the course content of B.A. programs in early care and education, and how these variations impact student practice. We know, for example, that the students participating in the six cohort programs studied here will receive one of four differently-titled degrees, but we know little about the extent to which these differences represent issues of nomenclature or of substance—and, if the latter, what their impact is on teacher behavior.

In addition, a growing body of research emphasizes the importance of early and frequent fieldwork or practicum experiences as a cornerstone of effective teacher preparation. Yet we have scant evidence about how ECE teacher preparation programs vary in the quality or intensity of their fieldwork experiences, or how or whether higher education programs of different types, offering different degrees, assess the competence of graduating students in terms of teaching practice (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Further, while many students reported that their directors and workplace colleagues were supportive, others experienced less flexibility at the workplace when they needed to be away from their classrooms, and found negotiating with their employers about the fieldwork or practicum experience particularly vexing. In the coming year, we hope to learn more about how cohort program administrators can help broker these relationships, perhaps by involving center directors and administrators in program design and implementation. We also hope to learn how institutions design placements at students' own workplaces. In addition, we

hope to learn more about the elements of effective field supervision and mentoring. A final area of investigation centers on conditions at students' own workplaces—namely, how these support or impede the application of what one has learned in a B.A. program, as well as supporting or impeding further learning and growth.

3. Can institutions of higher education, with sufficient support, create and maintain B.A. completion cohort programs successfully?

In considering the reflections of administrators and faculty members, their pressing concerns revolved less around issues of creating or improving programs for working adults in ECE than about whether these programs could be sustained. The institutions were willing to make accommodations to meet student needs, and although the six programs varied, they were all responsive and creative in addressing the challenges that accompany serving this population. In part, this responsiveness reflected institutional values, but without the help of outside funds and clear expectations on the part of the funding agencies, it is unlikely that these programs would have been established or that they would have included such comprehensive student support.

The harsh reality is that, unless ongoing external funds become available to institutions of higher education, these programs may well be short-lived pilots. Given the fiscal crisis facing higher education, administrators of these programs frankly declared themselves unable to continue their efforts without ongoing support for student and operational costs. Although local First 5 agencies have generously invested in these programs, their dollars were intended to stimulate systems change rather than to provide long-term funding.

Of course, other factors could also influence the loss of external support. Should significant numbers of students in these programs fail to complete their degrees, for example, further investments will become unlikely. Similarly, should these programs fail to lead to demonstrably improved teaching practices and child outcomes, much of the rationale for their existence will diminish. Above all, the persistence of very low wages in the ECE field could seriously undermine these B.A. completion efforts, if cohort participants, shortly upon graduation, left their jobs or the ECE field altogether in search of better-paid employment.

As we continue to investigate these programs, we intend to catalog in more detail the factors that most efficiently ensure student access, increase the likelihood of degree completion, and support improved teaching practices. But as with the issue of improving the quality of early care and education programs, these factors are less difficult to determine than whether there will be the public will to commit the necessary resources to support degree completion programs and more appropriate compensation for early childhood educators. In assessing long-term costs, we cannot overlook what the absence of such educational opportunities could mean for children, and for creating an ethnically and linguistically diverse workforce and leadership in the field of early care and education.

Implications for Institutions and Policy Makers

Three major policy issues have come to the fore in this first year of study:

Investment in Higher Education. Colleges and universities recognize clearly that they cannot build or expand new program initiatives without significant ongoing resources, and ECE programs within colleges and universities are especially challenged and under-funded (Whitebook et al., 2005). Likewise, most working students in the ECE field need substantial financial assistance in order to participate. Fortunately, there are successful models of public financing of higher education for targeted professions that are worthy of replication and expansion. In the field of early care and education, New Jersey's publicly funded Abbott Preschool Program included a statewide higher education initiative that successfully helped current and incoming teachers meet a new B.A. requirement, leading to preschool jobs at the same compensation levels as K-12 teaching (Whitebook, Ryan, Kipnis, & Sakai, 2008). Federal workforce development initiatives, including incentives to create and support higher education programs for specific job sectors, have also been implemented in the fields of special education (U.S. Department of Education, 2000) and medicine (Grumbach, Hart, Mertz, Coffman, & Palazzo, 2003), as well as others.

New Jersey policy makers understood that guaranteeing universal access to high-quality preschool in the state's poorest school districts would involve more than the per-child costs of the preschool services themselves. In requiring preschool teachers to complete B.A. degrees and certification within a five-year period, they recognized that the state would need to invest in its teacher preparation infrastructure as well as helping students cover the costs of higher education. As a result, New Jersey provided "Quality and Capacity" and "Teacher Effectiveness and Teacher Preparation" grants to help institutions of higher education expand their early childhood faculties, a move they saw as critical for meeting the new standards. This support, along with accessible certification programs and a generous scholarship program for students, allowed New Jersey's preschool program to meet the teacher requirement mandate; " the right combination of carrots and sticks" had made it possible (Ryan & Lobman, 2006). New Jersey policy makers are continuing to assess the state's teacher development system and refine these investments, and currently are focusing greater attention on the quality and appropriateness of teacher education and ongoing professional development programs.

Compensation. Given the ongoing challenge of low compensation in ECE employment, it remains in doubt whether substantial numbers of students who complete these B.A. degrees will actually stay at their current jobs or in any ECE-related jobs. We will follow the career trajectories of these students to establish at what rates they remain in teaching jobs, and/or in the ECE field, vs. transferring their skills and education to other endeavors. While the vast majority of interviewed students reported the intention to remain in the field after completing their degrees, it remains to be seen whether they will, given the expanded career opportunities that a B.A. may afford them. By adopting B.A. and certification requirements for preschool teachers that have also set standards for compensation comparable to K-12 teachers, states such as New Jersey have recognized that retaining well-educated students in the ECE field requires a significant infusion of public dollars (Whitebook, Ryan, Kipnis, & Sakai, 2008).

Beyond the B.A. To date, most investments in the education of the ECE workforce have focused on teachers and providers who work directly with children on a daily basis. While there is a good deal of discussion in the ECE field about the need to create a pipeline for emerging leaders—both to help them build their skills and meet the educational requirements of such positions as college instructors, and to establish more intentional pathways to diversify the leadership of the ECE field—there has been limited action in this arena. While two of the First 5 agencies supporting these B.A. completion cohort programs are also supporting graduate cohort programs, and a third agency supported such a program several years ago, public policies have yet to be developed to systematically address these issues. And while these problems are not unique to California, there is a particular dearth of early childhood-related graduate programs in the state (Whitebook et al., 2005). As two New Jersey researchers and advocates recently observed,

Knowledgeable leaders who can support teachers on the job to improve their expertise are central to any kind of ongoing educational improvement. Creating a cadre of qualified leaders will necessitate instituting new programs linked to some kind of career ladder, so that experienced and qualified teachers have options as to how they use their expertise to develop others in the profession. In creating this career ladder, attention must be given to incentives that will retain a diverse leadership pool, to prevent those teachers who continue to improve their qualifications from leaving the profession (Ryan & Lobman, 2006).

Strikingly, many students in this study expressed an eagerness not only to complete a B.A., but also to continue their education further to the M.A. or even Ph.D. level. In this light, higher education efforts such B.A. completion cohort programs—and by implication, new opportunities for post-baccalaureate education—should be institutionalized in order to serve as an ongoing leadership pipeline for the ECE field.

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This first phase of a multi-year investigation of B.A. completion cohort programs indicates the potential of such programs to contribute a linguistically and ethnically diverse group of well-trained teachers and leaders to the early care and education profession. These six programs under study build on lessons from other fields and could well become models not only for the ECE field in California and other states, but also for other fields, helping diverse groups of working adults gain access to and succeed in higher education. Their existence reflects an understanding of the needs of the ECE field on the part of local policy makers; now, their ability to extend this promise rests with their counterparts in state and national government.

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Appendices

I. Supplementary Tables and Figures

Table A-1: Ethnicity, Gender and Age of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

	Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	Alameda County: Mills College	San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	Total
Ethnicity							
White, non-Hispanic	36%	33%	9%	10%	17%	44%	22%
Latino/Hispanic	36%	33%	64%	76%	75%	28%	55%
African American	18%	33%	9%	0%	0%	0%	7%
Asian American	0%	0%	12%	0%	0%	16%	7%
Multiethnic	9%	0%	6%	14%	8%	12%	9%
TOTAL	*99%*	*99%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	100%
N (Program data; SJSU: Winter 2008)	*11*	*6*	*33*	*21*	*12*	*25*	*108*
Gender							
Female	100%	100%	94%	96%	100%	97%	97%
Male	0%	0%	6%	4%	0%	3%	3%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	100%
N (Program data)	*14*	*6*	*33*	*23*	*12*	*33*	121
Age (Years)							
Youngest	26	41	27	23	25	24	23
Oldest	60	60	58	58	58	59	60
Mean	46	50	45	37	38	42	42
N (Program data)	*14*	*5*	*32*	*21*	*11*	*33*	*116*

Please note very small sample sizes.

Table A-2: Country of Origin of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

	Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	Alameda County: Mills College	San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	Total
Country of Origin							
USA	79%	100%	33%	85%	42%	70%	62%
Outside USA	21%	0%	67%	15%	58%	30%	38%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	100%
N (Program data)	*14*	*5*	*33*	*20*	*12*	*33*	*117*

Please note very small sample sizes.

Table A-3: Linguistic Background of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

	Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	Alameda County: Mills College	San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	Total
Native Language							
English	73%	100%	26%	65%	30%	63%	53%
Spanish	18%	0%	58%	35%	70%	19%	37%
Chinese	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	11%	6%
Other	9%	0%	7%	0%	0%	7%	5%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*101%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*101%*
N (Winter 2008)	*11*	*6*	*31*	*23*	*10*	*27*	*108*
Primary Language(s) Spoken at Home							
English only	82%	100%	24%	57%	33%	59%	50%
English & Spanish*	9%	0%	30%	24%	33%	13%	21%
Spanish only, or Spanish & a language other than English	9%	0%	33%	19%	33%	16%	22%
English & a language other than Spanish	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	9%	3%
Other	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	3%	3%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*99%*	*100%*	*99%*	*100%*	*99%*
N (Program data CSU-EB: Winter 2008)	*11*	*6*	*33*	*21*	*12*	*32*	*115*
Language(s) Spoken with Children and Families							
English only	73%	83%	19%	30%	30%	63%	43%
English & Spanish*	27%	0%	71%	70%	70%	22%	50%
Spanish only, or Spanish & another language not English	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
English & a language other than Spanish	0%	17%	10%	0%	0%	15%	7%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
N (Winter 2008)	*11*	*6*	*31*	*23*	*10*	*27*	*108*

*Students might also speak a third language.
Please note very small sample sizes.

Table A-4: Family and Household Status of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

	Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	Alameda County: Mills College	San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	Total
Living with a spouse or partner	82%	67%	61%	65%	70%	89%	72%
Other adults living in the household	63%	17%	61%	61%	60%	22%	49%
Living with child under 18 years	36%	50%	55%	65%	60%	59%	57%
Living with child under 5 years	9%	17%	10%	35%	30%	15%	19%
N (Winter 2008)	*11*	*6*	*31*	*23*	*10*	*27*	*108*

Please note very small sample sizes.

Table A-5: Educational Attainment of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

	Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	Alameda County: Mills College	San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	Total
Some college	18%	33%	3%	4%	20%	19%	12%
A.A. degree	73%	67%	84%	96%	80%	74%	82%
B.A. or higher	9%	0%	13%	0%	0%	7%	7%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*101%*
N (Winter 2008)	*11*	*6*	*31*	*23*	*10*	*27*	*108*
A.A. Degree holders							
A.A. degree in ECE	63%	75%	85%	77%	75%	85%	80%
N (Winter 2008)	*8*	*4*	*26*	*22*	*8*	*20*	*88*
Received A.A. degree five or more years ago	63%	75%	75%	59%	38%	75%	66%
N (Winter 2008)	*8*	*4*	*24*	*22*	*8*	*20*	*86*

Please note very small sample sizes.

Figure A-1. Adequacy of Financial Assistance, as Reported by Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs

Winter 2008
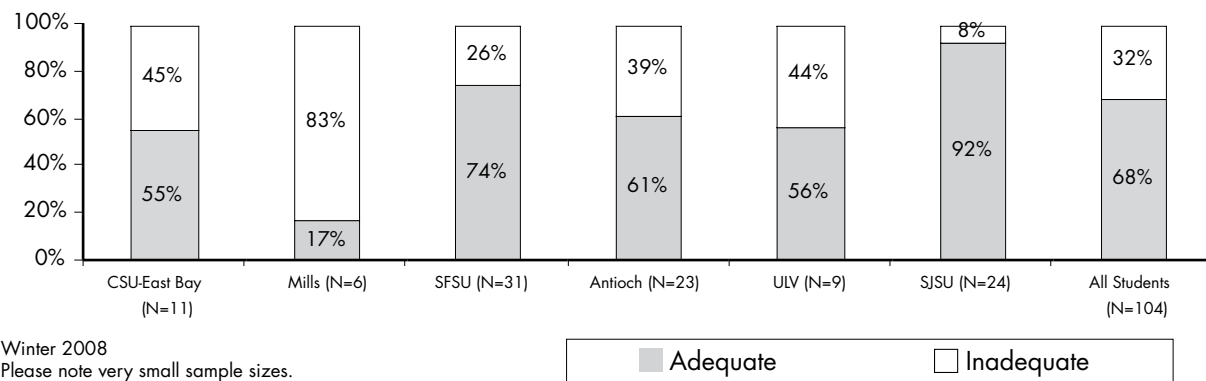Please note very small sample sizes.

Table A-6: Tenure and Participation in Professional Organizations of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

	Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	Alameda County: Mills College	San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	Total
Tenure							
Average number of years in current center	10	7	8	8	8	7	8
Less than two years	8%	40%	18%	4%	0%	12%	11%
Two to five years	17%	20%	21%	31%	45%	32%	28%
More than five years	75%	40%	61%	65%	55%	56%	61%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
N (Fall 2007)	*12*	*5*	*28*	*23*	*11*	*25*	*104*
Average number of years in current position (center-based)	6	7	5	5	7	4	5
N (Fall 2007)	*12*	*5*	*29*	*23*	*11*	*25*	*105*
Average number of years at current family child care home	N/A	14	20	N/A	10	8	12
N (Fall 2007)	*0*	*1*	*2*	*0*	*1*	*5*	*9*
Average number of years since first paid job in ECE	17	17	17	13	14	17	16
Have worked consistently in ECE since first paid job	75%	100%	93%	96%	100%	87%	*91%*
N (Fall 2007)	*12*	*6*	*30*	*23*	*8*	*30*	*109*
ECE Professional Organizations							
Member of any professional ECE organization	75%	67%	50%	70%	45%	67%	62%
NAEYC or affiliate	58%	50%	22%	61%	36%	50%	44%
Other*	42%	33%	37%	22%	9%	40%	32%
N (Fall 2007)	*12*	*6*	*30*	*23*	*11*	*30*	*112*

*Examples of other organizations: Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program, Montessori organizations, family child care provider associations, Zero to Three, PACE, Head Start, teacher unions, Children's defense Fund.

Please note very small sample sizes.

Table A-7: Characteristics of Places of Employment of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

	Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	Alameda County: Mills College	San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	Total
Place of employment							
Licensed child care center	100%	83%	77%	100%	100%	78%	87%
Licensed family child care home	0%	17%	7%	0%	0%	19%	7%
License-exempt school-age care	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	4%	4%
Other (informal; respite care)	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	2%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*101%*	*100%*	*100%*	*101%*	100%
N (Fall 2007)	*11*	*6*	*31*	*23*	*10*	*27*	*108*
Subsidy status of center							
Head Start center	9%	0%	24%	65%	50%	0%	29%
Contract with California Department of Education	55%	50%	65%	35%	40%	52%	49%
Private	36%	25%	12%	0%	10%	48%	21%
Other	0%	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*101%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
N (Fall 2007)	*11*	*4*	*17*	*23*	*10*	*21*	*86*

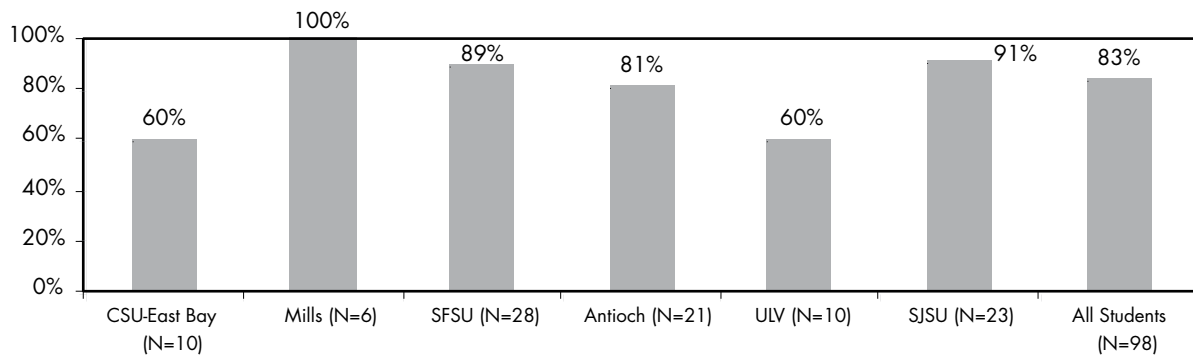**Please note very small sample sizes.**

Table A-8: Employment Status of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

	Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	Alameda County: Mills College	San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	Total
Ages of children served							
Under 2 years	33%	17%	22%	13%	27%	47%	28%
2 years	25%	67%	25%	56%	46%	67%	47%
3 years	42%	50%	78%	87%	64%	77%	73%
4 years to kindergarten	58%	83%	81%	87%	64%	80%	78%
School age	33%	17%	50%	30%	46%	43%	40%
One age group only	42%	50%	13%	13%	18%	13%	18%
Mixed age groups	58%	50%	87%	87%	82%	87%	82%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
N (Fall 2007)	*12*	*6*	*32*	*23*	*11*	*30*	*114*
Job titles for center staff							
Assistant teacher	8%	0%	14%	5%	9%	14%	10%
Lead/master teacher	75%	80%	64%	43%	64%	38%	56%
Assistant director	0%	20%	0%	5%	0%	5%	3%
Site supervisor/program director/executive director[8]	8%	0%	11%	29%	18%	19%	16%
Teacher/site supervisor/director	0%	0%	11%	5%	9%	10%	7%
Other	8%	0%	0%	14%	0%	14%	7%
TOTAL	*99%*	*100%*	*100%*	*101%*	*100%*	*100%*	*99%*
N (Fall 2007)	*12*	*5*	*28*	*21*	*11*	*21*	*98*
Hours worked per week							
30 or more hours	67%	83%	81%	100%	100%	97%	89%
Less than 30 hours	33%	17%	19%	0%	0%	3%	11%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
Average number of hours per week	*32*	*35*	*35*	*39*	*39*	*41*	*38*
N (Fall 2007)	12	6	32	23	11	30	114
Months worked per year							
Full year (11-12 months)	75%	83%	78%	65%	40%	67%	69%
10 months or less	25%	17%	22%	35%	60%	33%	31%
TOTAL	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*	*100%*
N (Fall 2007)	*12*	*6*	*32*	*23*	*10*	*30*	*113*

Please note very small sample sizes.

[8]SFSU cohort included a site supervisor/assistant director.

Figure A-2. Percentage of Students in Six BA Completion Cohort Programs with Educational Aspirations Beyond a BA Degree

Winter 2008
Please note very small sample sizes.

Table A-9: Career Aspirations of Students in Six B.A. Completion Cohort Programs

	Alameda County: CSU-East Bay	Alameda County: Mills College	San Francisco County: San Francisco State University	Santa Barbara County: Antioch University	Santa Barbara County: University of La Verne	Santa Clara County: San Jose State University	Total
Keep current job	40%	17%	10%	19%	30%	25%	21%
New position in current workplace	20%	17%	13%	67%	40%	33%	32%
Different workplace: ECE	40%	50%	61%	10%	20%	33%	37%
Employment not in the ECE field	0%	0%	10%	5%	0%	0%	4%
Other	0%	17%	7%	0%	10%	8%	6%
TOTAL	*100%*	*101%*	*101%*	*101%*	*100%*	*99%*	*100%*
N (Winter 2008)	*10*	*6*	*31*	*21*	*10*	*24*	*102*

Please note very small sample sizes.

II. Cohort Program Profiles

Antioch University

Antioch University, a six-campus university located in four states, including a campus in the city of Santa Barbara, offers a B.A. in Liberal Studies with a concentration in Child, Family, and Society (CFS), focusing on children from birth to age eight. A "north county" cohort of 20 transfer-ready students began in July 2007 at Allan Hancock College, a public community college located in Santa Maria, about 60 miles from the Santa Barbara campus. As of Spring 2008, there were 23 students in the group, expected to complete their B.A. degrees by Winter 2009.

To be eligible for the program and receive financial aid, students were required to be working in "an identified potential Preschool For All program" (Head Start, State Preschool, or private center in a low API school area); to have been employed in such a program for three or more years; and to have completed either an associate degree or at least 50 of the total 60 transferable units. For the duration of the cohort, students are also required to participate in STAR, Santa Barbara County's CARES program, if eligible.

The program is offered on the quarter schedule, over seven quarters, and is designed as a part-time cohort, allowing students to be concurrently enrolled in community college and to complete their 60 transferable units along with the upper-division requirements for graduation.

Faculty members from Antioch University's Santa Barbara campus and from Allan Hancock College met prior to the start of the cohort to ensure that there were no overlaps in curricula. Students can also earn up to 44 college units (22 lower-division and 22 upper-division) for life experience and independent studies, which they document through a written presentation or portfolio that is subject to evaluation by qualified supervisors.

For the Child, Family and Society (CFS) concentration, students take 20 courses, totaling 60 units, which include five semesters of a supervised CFS practicum at their own place of work and a Capstone Senior Project. The Capstone Project is typically a formal presentation by students to the cohort community, detailing their learning experiences over the course of the program and their career vision for the future.

Antioch University recruited cohort students through email, letters, flyers, notices in local newspapers and newsletters, and direct outreach by academic counselors to prospective students working at child care and Head Start agencies. Antioch also offered a series of informational meetings, in collaboration with First 5 Santa Barbara County, to public and private child care agencies and other direct service providers. Students completed a standard application process, along with a one-day interview that included financial aid counseling, transcript review, and the development of an individual education plan.

Cohort participants take all classes together on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings at Allan Hancock College. The students were involved in choosing which days of the week to meet, and the university is willing to accommodate the needs of each cohort individually. All CFS faculty have backgrounds in child development, and provide an individualized, hands-on teaching approach that emphasizes reflection and critical thinking. All cohort students have access to an advisor, as well as technology resources at the Allan Hancock College site.

Tuition is $17,872 for the seven-quarter program; students pay $4,148, the balance not covered by the various forms of financial assistance available. In the first year of the cohort program, First 5 Santa Barbara provided funds for Antioch University to award grants of $3,000 per student per fiscal year, which Antioch then matched with "Presidential Scholarships" of $3,000 per student per year. First 5 also paid for Antioch faculty to attend a conference on B.A. completion programs. Further, students participating in the STAR program also received stipends of at least $1,800 per year, and Antioch matched these stipends with an additional tuition reduction of $1,800.

As of the 2008-2009 fiscal year, these levels of financial support from First 5 Santa Barbara, from the STAR program, and from Antioch University remain the same, but students now access the First 5 funds by applying to the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara, which awards $3,000 per student per year directly to Antioch in the student's name. Antioch is continuing to match the First 5 funds and STAR stipends.

A second cohort is anticipated to start in Summer 2008, with a minimum enrollment of 12 to 15 students.

California State University-East Bay

California State University-East Bay's cohort program offers a B.A. degree in Human Development with an Early Childhood Development emphasis, focused on the first five years of life. This degree also includes a 24-unit Teacher Education minor in Early Childhood Education. The program is housed in two CSU departments, Human Development and Teacher Education, and is led by a Professional Development Coordinator, who is employed by the East Bay Community Foundation with funds from First 5 Alameda County. First 5 has also supplied grant funds to support two faculty positions for student advising, one in Human Development and one in Teacher Education.

For the Teacher Education minor, students take a total of six courses, including a practicum, a course in children with special needs, and courses in curriculum development. Human Development courses include courses on the life span, and on social issues such as foster care and preschool.

A cohort of 15 students began in January 2007; as of Spring 2008, there were 13 students in the group, expected to complete their degrees in 10 quarters, by Summer 2009.

To be eligible for this program, students must be transfer-ready at the junior-year level, and must have completed most if not all of their General Education courses. They must work at least 15 hours per week in the early care and education field, either in a licensed program that serves children between birth and age five, or in a subsidized program serving school-age children. Students must also have worked in the same facility for at least nine months. Further, the program requires the expressed support of directors of the centers where students are employed.

To recruit students into the program, First 5 Alameda held an informational meeting in June 2006, attended by about 75 prospective participants. Letters and flyers went out to members of the Child Development Corps, Alameda County's CARES program. A variety of local agencies were also contacted, including the Oakland and Hayward Unified School Districts, Head Start programs, state-subsidized child care programs, and community college programs in early childhood education or child development.

Cohort members take all of their classes together on a set schedule, with the exception of the practicum course, which in Winter 2008 took place at students' worksites. Students also receive assistance from mentor teachers or mentor directors, who help them apply what they have learned in their course work. In addition, the cohort coordinator works individually with each student, and hosts a two-hour cohort meeting each month, held in the evening at the First 5 Alameda County office in San Leandro. These one-on-one and group meetings have focused on such issues as developing leadership and advocacy skills; becoming familiar with available resources; writing and editing skills; making presentations; and stress management. As part of the practicum course, students also attend four seminar meetings with the practicum instructor, and work individually with a practicum coach.

Other support services include basic assistance with research skills from a campus research librarian. The program may offer tutoring assistance in the future, but students have not requested it; cohort members have formed study groups on their own.

Tuition and student fees are fully covered, but all cohort members are required to apply for financial aid, and to accept available grants, in order to reduce the amount that First 5 Alameda needs to cover; all but one student in the cohort received a grant and/or loan. Tuition costs are approximately $700 per quarter for six units or less, and $1,000 for more than six units. These First 5 funds are administered by the East Bay Community Foundation.

Plans are now underway for a second cohort of 20 students, who will also receive scholarships, to begin in Fall 2008. The program is working with Head Start and the Hayward Unified School District to identify employees as potential participants in this cohort.

Mills College

Mills College's B.A. Program for Working Professionals, housed in the Education Department and offering a major in Child Development in the Education Department, began in January 2007 with a cohort of seven part-time students; as of Spring 2008, six students were expected to complete their degrees in Spring 2009 or 2010. The program is designed to run for six semesters plus three summer intensive sessions; some students will complete it sooner because of the number of classes they transferred in with, and some may take longer because of enrolling later or needing to take time off.

Student eligibility requirements for this program, whish is supported by First 5 Alameda County, are essentially the same as for the CSU-East Bay cohort. To be eligible, students must be transfer-ready at the junior-year level, and must have completed their General Education requirements, with the exception of the Women and Education course that is required at Mills but not typically offered elsewhere. They must work at least 15 hours per week in the early care and education field, either in a licensed program that serves children between birth and age five, or in a subsidized program serving school-age children. Students must also have worked in the same facility for at least nine months. Further, the program requires the expressed support of directors of the centers where students are employed. First 5 Alameda publicized the program to potential applicants throughout the community in partnership with Mills College.

The program operates on a semester schedule, with students taking all of their coursework together, but not in classes separate from other undergraduate Child Development students. All students take at least two courses per semester, and as of January 2008, at least two courses in sequential order are taught back-to-back in the evening. Thirty-four units are required for graduation. All cohort participants meet regularly with an advisor who works only with the cohort; apart from this, the college has not set up separate cohort activities, not wanting to divide the cohort members from other Mills students. Support services available to all students include assistance from the Mills Writing Center. The one-semester practicum class at Mills is generally taken at the campus Children's School, three mornings per week, but as of spring 2008, it was unclear how this requirement would be arranged or adapted for the working students in this cohort.

Student costs are covered by scholarships from First 5 Alameda County and a tuition reduction by Mills College from $5,090 to $1,930 per course, supplemented by other grants and student loans. All cohort students are required to apply for financial aid. Despite this substantial assistance, the college estimates that students in the cohort will graduate with an average debt of $20,000. First 5 funds awarded directly to Mills also cover the costs of offering evening classes, giving the college the opportunity to offer such courses to all students, not just to cohort members.

At the present time, there are no definite plans for a second cohort, but the college is interested in creating one if further funding from First 5 Alameda County or other sources becomes available.

San Francisco State University

San Francisco State University (SFSU) offers a Dual Language B.A. degree in Child and Adolescent Development, using the Soy Bilingüe Adult Dual Language Model developed by the Center for Linguistic and Cultural Democracy in Seattle. Students attend for a total of six semesters, plus three summer sessions, over a period of roughly three years. For the first phase of the process, students complete their General Education courses together to become transfer-ready at the upper-division level. These courses, in such areas as English, Math, Science, and Art, are offered through Seattle Central Community College, with which SFSU has an articulation agreement, at locations in San Francisco or Berkeley.

As of Spring 2008, there were 33 students in a cohort that began working together in January 2006, enrolled at SFSU in Fall 2007, and were expected to complete their degrees in December 2008.

Cohort participants take eight classes together per year, six of them in a weekend format (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., broken up into four time blocks), and two offered as weeklong intensives. Classes are held either at the local Head Start office or at the SFSU Extension in downtown San Francisco, not at the main SFSU campus.

Half of the instruction in this program is conducted in Spanish, and half in English. Simultaneous translation is provided as needed. Approximately half the participants are Spanish-dominant, and half are English-dominant; speakers of other languages are also welcome. Students work in one of four subgroups or study teams; in addition, "bilingual buddies" or language partners are formed to enable Spanish-dominant, English-dominant, and fully bilingual students to support each other's continued language and literacy development in both Spanish and English. The program conducts language assessments of all students to get a clear sense of each person's oral and written comprehension skills in English and Spanish.

Coursework includes literacy development, academic writing, reflective writing practice, group reflection, guest speakers, and large and small group work, as well as hand-on activities that do not require translation services. In general, the cohort has been able to stay together and take courses at the same time; anyone who needs to make up a class is able to complete it with the next cohort, take another San Francisco State course, or take an independent course. Cohort meetings are also held at least once per quarter.

The practicum is generally completed at one's own work site, but also includes additional lecture time with the practicum instructor. While students are not required to complete their practicum in the classroom, their work must be in an area related to child and adolescent development (for example, advocacy).

The program was made possible by funding to the San Francisco State University Head Start program from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, supplemented by funds from the Miriam and Peter Haas Fund and First 5 San Francisco. This funding fully covers student costs, including books. In addition, students who work in Head Start programs are paid by their employers when they attend daytime classes.

The program conducted limited recruitment for the first cohort, concentrating mostly on a referral process for an existing group of students, primarily Head Start or Preschool For All staff who had completed or nearly completed an associate degree. The application process consisted of transcripts, a letter of intent, and a referral; all transfer-ready applicants were accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Funding also covered transcript evaluations for those with previous college experience outside the U.S.

Part of the Cohort Coordinator's role has been to serve as student advisor. The program has also been able to purchase the services of SFSU administrative counselors, and a liaison from Teacher Education, who selected faculty and helped design courses around the specific needs of the cohort students. Among other types of support, a computer lab is available at the Head Start main office.

A second cohort of 40 students, already engaged in completing General Education courses, is expected to enter SFSU in Fall 2009. All other applicants are on a waiting list for a possible third cohort, for which a formal selection panel might be created.

San Jose State University

San Jose State University (SJSU) offers a B.A. degree in Child and Adolescent Development. The cohort program, created with the support of the WestEd E3 Institute (E3), began in September 2006, and as of Spring 2008 consisted of 32 students, expected to complete their degrees in a four-year course schedule by May 2010. There are no plans at this time for a second cohort.

The cohort program covers the 51 upper-division units in Child and Adolescent Development; these required courses, which are offered to the cohort only, are taught continuously, year-round, in 10- to 12-week cycles. These concentrated courses contain the same class content, and are taught by the same SJSU faculty, as regular SJSU courses.

Classes are held in the evening at the E3 Institute office, once per week, to accommodate the schedules of working adults. Cohort students have also asked for specific elective courses, such as Early Childhood Special Education, and Language and Literature. Students also attend periodic cohort meetings held by E3 to help create a sense of community. The Practicum class for this cohort will be offered during the students' final quarter, in Spring 2010; the course will include 18 hours of lecture along with field experience that students can fulfill at their own work places. This particular model is only available to the cohort students; other SJSU students fulfill their practicum hours at the campus lab school.

To recruit students into the program, E3 identified Santa Clara CARES participants who had completed General Education units, and sent them a letter describing the program and inviting them to a general orientation. Three orientations were offered, attended by a total of 35 people, nearly all of whom applied to the program. Upon acceptance, students received a one-on-one advising session with the Child and Adolescent Development Department Chair.

Cohort members are subject to the same eligibility requirements as all SJSU students. To be accepted, they must complete all lower-division requirements and be transfer-ready; in addition, they must remain active members of Santa Clara CARES, and maintain a 2.0 GPA, throughout the program. Since E3 itself was unable to offer all the General Education courses needed for eligibility, some students needed to take

community college courses, and pay for them on their own, in order to meet the application standards.

E3 covers application fees, tuition, book costs, and writing exam and graduation fees. Cohort participants also receive annual stipends as members of Santa Clara CARES. In addition, E3 covers the faculty costs of offering these concentrated evening classes.

The Department Chair offers an annual academic advising session to each cohort program student, during which the student fills out a CARES professional development and education plan. She and E3 staff are in regular contact to review students' academic progress and retention in the program. In addition, faculty members have done considerable outreach to cohort students, even expanding their office hours in order to provide individual academic support.

University of LaVerne

The University of LaVerne (ULV), whose main campus is located in the city of La Verne in Los Angeles County, has ten campuses throughout Southern California. Historically a teacher's college, ULV is actively marketing itself as a venue for teacher preparation in the field of early care and education; as of Spring 2008, it had 29 student cohorts at its various campuses working toward a B.A. degree in Child Development. ULV, alone among the six institutions of higher education in this study, is also currently pursuing accreditation from NCATE, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

The group under study here is a cohort of 15 students at Allan Hancock College in Santa Maria, Santa Barbara County, who began in Spring 2007, with tuition assistance from First 5 Santa Barbara. These students are expected to complete their degrees at the end of the Fall 2009 term.

The students are subject to the same eligibility requirements as for the Antioch University cohort, which is also supported by First 5 Santa Barbara. They must work in "an identified potential Preschool For All program" (Head Start, State Preschool, or private center in a low API school area), and must have been employed in such a program for three or more years. For the duration of the cohort, students are also required to participate in STAR, Santa Barbara County's CARES program, if eligible.

The university conducted recruitment through its marketing department, working closely with Santa Barbara County's CARES and AB212 programs, and with First 5 Santa Barbara, which held informational meetings and conducted outreach to local child care agencies. Prospective students completed an application and an interview with a faculty member, and were required to have completed a minimum of 28 transferable units (15 of these in Child Development) at the start of the program. Certain courses are mandatory before transfer, including English I and II; Child, Family, and Society; and a Curriculum class in Child Development. Some students are concurrently enrolled in a community college to complete their General Education requirements.

The cohort operates on a "cluster" model, in which all courses are taken together as a group, and courses build on one another in a specific sequence. (The only exception is an upper-level General Education course, Values of Critical Thinking, which is offered online.) All classes are held at night to accommodate working students' schedules, with an occasional part-day class offered on Saturday. The degree program is a series of 10 ten-week "accelerated" semesters, offered four per year, for a total of two and one-half years. The age span covered in the Child Development classes is generally birth to eight, with the exception of a Child Psychology course that covers birth through adolescence. There are no formalized cohort meetings apart from classes, although students often communicate with each other through the Blackboard program.

The practicum component of the program—180 hours of field experience, for at least six hours per week but no more than 20 per week—takes place at approved sites other than the students' own work places. Some students are able to reduce the amount of required field experience to as little as 60 hours by demonstrating knowledge and skill based on previous work experience. Students are also assessed for readiness before being sent to a practicum site. The program coordinator pre-approves the practicum sites through site visits, conducting an Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) assessment, and arranging for mentoring; a ULV professor also visits students once every 20 to 30 hours of field experience. While it can be challenging for a working student to complete this field experience at a separate site, ULV stresses the importance of expo-

sure to different perspectives and models from what the student already knows, and makes this requirement clear at the time of enrollment. Some students have reduced their work hours, taken leaves of absence, or used vacation or summer break time in order to complete this portion of the degree program.

Support services include one-on-one counseling with the General Education advisor and with the Child Development Director, as well as email assistance and tutoring from the Learning Enhancement Center at the main ULV campus in La Verne. More on-campus student assistance is available at the nearest ULV campus, at Oxnard in neighboring Ventura County, but this can be challenging for the Santa Barbara students to access.

Tuition for the 10-semester program is $18,170; students pay $5,410, the balance not covered by financial assistance. In the first year of the cohort program, students received grants of $3,000 per year directly from First 5 Santa Barbara; as of the 2008-2009 fiscal year, they now apply for grants to the Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara, which awards $3,000 per student per year directly to the University of La Verne in the student's name. Students participating in the STAR program also receive a stipend of at least $1,800 per year. In addition, the university has waived its application fee for the cohort students (approximately $50).

III. Cohort Program Chart

Learning Together: B.A. Completion Cohort Programs at Six Institutions of Higher Education

General Information

Institution	Auspice	Student Body Size	County	Department Name; Number of Students in Department	Major or Concentration	Degree Offered	Cohort Size
Antioch University	Private Nonprofit	309 at Santa Barbara campus	Santa Barbara (Antioch has 6 campuses in 4 states)	Liberal Studies; 93	Concentration in Child, Family, Society	B.A.	23
CSU East Bay	Public	B.A. programs: 9,610; Overall: 13,124 (as of Fall 2007)	Alameda	Two depts.: Human Development, 337; Teacher Education (M.A. program), 218	Human Development ECE emphasis, Teacher Education minor	B.A.	14
Mills College	Private Nonprofit	1,454 (2007-08)	Alameda	Education; 30-40	Child Development	B.A.	6
San Francisco State University	Public	Total: 29,628 Undergraduate: 23,843 Graduate 5,785 (as of Fall 2006)	San Francisco	Child and Adolescent Development; approx. 850	Child and Adolescent Development	B.A.	33
San Jose State University	Public	31,906	Santa Clara	Child and Adolescent Development; approx. 700	Child and Adolescent Development	B.A.	32
University of La Verne	Private For-profit	1,685 at Santa Barbara campus (as of Fall 2003)	Santa Barbara (10 campuses in southern CA; main campus in LA County)	Child Development, information not available	Child Development	B.A.	12

Start and End Dates, Coordinators

Institution	Cohort Start Date	Expected Graduation Date	Designated Program Coordinator	Plans for Second Cohort
Antioch University	July 2007	Winter 2009	Administrative Coordinator of Education Programs	Anticipated start Summer 2008, minimum 12-15 students
CSU East Bay	January 2007	Summer 2009	Professional Development Coordinator, funded through First 5	Second cohort to begin Fall 2008, with 22 students
Mills College	January 2007	Some students in Spring 2009, some in 2010	Professor of Education, Chair of Early Childhood	Only if funding available from First 5
San Francisco State University	Enrolled at SFSU Fall 2007; began prior work together in Jan. 2006 to become transfer-ready	December 2008	Coordinator is located at Soy Bilingüe Network, Seattle Central Community College	Second cohort has begun completing its General Education courses; expected to enroll at SFSU in Fall 2009
San Jose State University	September 2006	May 2010	Department Chair	No
University of La Verne	Spring 2007	End of Fall 2009 term	Child Development Program Coordinator (for numerous cohorts in area)	ULV begins new cohorts as demand is identified; currently 29 cohorts on various campuses

Financial Arrangements

Institution	First 5 Contribution to Institution	First 5 Contribution to Students	First 5 requirements for students who receive aid	Student Costs	Institution Contribution
Antioch University	None	$3,000 per student per fiscal year (paid through Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara)	Working in "an identified potential Preschool For All program" (Head Start, State Preschool, or private API center in low API school area), and to have been employed in such a program for 3 or more years.	Tuition is $17,872 for 7-quarter program; students pay $4,148 (balance not covered by First 5 scholarship, STAR stipend, & institutional match)	Antioch matches First 5 contribution with President's Scholarships, and also matches students' STAR Program stipends (at least $1,800 per year)
CSU East Bay	First 5 grant to CSUEB to support Professional Development Coordinator's position and 2 faculty liaisons for advising (one each in Human Development and Teacher Education)	Approximately $4,000 per student per year for tuition and fees (paid through East Bay Community Foundation).	15 hours/week in licensed program for children birth to age 5, or in subsidized program for school-age children; same facility for at least 9 months	Parking and books	None
Mills College	Funds to pay for evening courses related to cohort.	Partial tuition; students are required to apply for financial aid.	15 hours/week in licensed program for children birth to age 5, or in subsidized program for school-age children; same facility for at least 9 months	$1,930 per course (reduced from $5,090); all students apply for financial aid to cover a portion of these costs.	Tuition reduction

Financial Arrangements (continued)					
San Francisco State University	Funding to the SFSU Head Start program by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, supplemented by funds from the Miriam and Peter Haas Fund and First 5 SF.	First 5 pays for tuition, books and class materials. Those working in Head Start are paid by their employers when taking daytime classes.	Head Start and Preschool For All are targeted (not required)	None	None
San Jose State University	E3 covers faculty costs for offering concentrated evening courses	E3 covers application fees, tuition, books, writing exam and graduation fees	Participation in Santa Clara CARES; maintain a 2.0 GPA	None	None
University of La Verne	None	$3,000 per student per fiscal year (paid through Scholarship Foundation of Santa Barbara)	Working in "an identified potential Preschool For All program" (Head Start, State Preschool, or private center in low API school area), and to have been employed in such a program for 3 or more years	Tuition is $18,170 for 10-semester program; students pay $5,410 (remainder not covered by First 5 scholarship or STAR stipend)	ULV waives application fee (approx. $50)

Cohort Structure

	Antioch University	CSU East Bay	Mills College	San Francisco State University	San Jose State University	University of La Verne
Duration of program	July 2007 to Winter 2009	January 2007 through Summer 2009	January 2007 to Spring 2009 or 2010 (varies by students' schedules and readiness)	January 2006 through December 2008 (enrolled at SFSU in Fall 2007 after becoming transfer-ready)	September 2006 to May 2010	May 2007 to Fall 2009
Number of quarters or semesters	7 quarters	Total of 10 quarters; 4 quarters per year	6 semesters plus 3 summer sessions; some are able to complete program more quickly	6 semesters, plus 3 summer sessions, over roughly 3 years	Concentrated courses offered year-round in 10-12 week cycles	10 ten-week accelerated semesters, offered 4 per year
Number of classes or units	20 classes	6 courses in Teacher Education minor; other courses in Human Development	34 units required for graduation; number of classes depends on how many classes a student transfers in with	8 classes per year: 6 in a weekend format, 2 as weeklong intensives	51 Child and Adolescent Development units	10 classes
Cohort design	Cohort takes all classes together, with cohort only; no cohort meetings	Students take all classes together; monthly evening cohort meetings at First 5 Alameda	Cohort takes all classes together, but not separate from other Mills students. At least two courses per semester; some classes held in the evening. No cohort meetings.	Cohort takes all classes together. Half of instruction in Spanish, half English. Students work in study teams, and have "bilingual buddies" or language partners. Cohort meetings at least once per quarter.	Cohort takes all classes together in the evening, with cohort only; periodic cohort meetings.	Cohort takes all classes together in a specific sequence. All classes in evening to accommodate working students' schedules; occasional part-day class on Saturday. No cohort meetings.

Cohort Structure (continued)	Antioch University	CSU East Bay	Mills College	San Francisco State University	San Jose State University	University of La Verne
Age span focus	Birth to age eight	Birth to age five	Birth to adolescence	Birth to adolescence	Birth to adolescence	Birth to age eight
Practicum structure	Practicum at one's own workplace; 5 quarters	Practicum at one's own workplace, including 4 seminar meetings w/ practicum instructor, and working with a practicum coach	At Mills College Children's School, 1 semester, 3 mornings per week; not yet clear how this will work for working students	Practicum at one's own workplace; does not have to be in classroom, but must be related to child and adolescent development	Practicum class combines 18 hours of lecture with field experience that students can fulfill at their own workplaces	Practicum at an approved site (not one's own workplace); 180 hours of field work, total can be reduced based on previous experience
Meeting location	Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria	CSU East Bay	Mills College	Some classes at Head Start office, some in downtown SF at SFSU Extension	E3 Institute	Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria

Student Eligibility, Application Process, and Recruitment

Institution	Eligibility for Acceptance to Institution	Recruitment Process	Application Process
Antioch University	Associate degree or at least 50 of the 60 transferable units; can be concurrently enrolled in community college; can receive credit for life experience.	Recruitment done through admission counselors working with First 5 Santa Barbara, which held informational meetings. Outreach to child care agencies through email, flyers, newspapers, newsletters, attendance at staff meetings and training and meetings with prospective students	Standard application process; one-day interview including financial aid counselor, transcript review, and development of individual educational plan
CSU East Bay	Transfer-ready at junior-year level; must have completed most if not all General Education courses.	Informational meeting held in June 2006. First 5 Alameda sent flyers announcing CSUEB and Mills program to Child Development Corps members and to Title 5 programs	Standard application; acceptance determined by Chair of Human Development
Mills College	Transfer-ready at junior-year level, must have completed General Education course, except for Mills course on Women and Education	First 5 Alameda sent flyers announcing CSUEB and Mills program to Child Development Corps members and to Title 5 programs	Standard application, transcript review by admissions officer
San Francisco State University	Must be transfer ready as defined by SFSU; if not General Education courses are offered through Seattle Central Community College	Limited recruitment for first cohort; mostly a referral process primarily for Head Start or Preschool For All staff who had completed or nearly completed an associate degree.	Referral and application, transcripts, letter of intent. Acceptance on first come, first serve basis
San Jose State University	Same as for all SJSU students, lower division GE requirements must be completed before beginning; Minimum of 70 units	E3 identified potential students from Santa Clara CARES database, sent letters, and held three orientation meetings; most who came to orientation applied; advisement session for those accepted.	Standard application; transcript review
University of La Verne	2 English classes, 28 transferable units: 15 in Child Development (Curriculum; Child, Family, Community), 13 General Education. Successful writing sample; can take observation class concurrently.	Recruitment done with First 5 Santa Barbara, which held informational meetings and did outreach to child care agencies; also recruited through Santa Barbara County's CARES and AB212 programs.	Standard application; interview with faculty