



TEACHING THE TEACHERS OF OUR
YOUNGEST CHILDREN:
THE STATE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD HIGHER
EDUCATION IN INDIANA, 2015

HIGHLIGHTS
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INTRODUCTION

Today, the importance of early care and education (ECE) to children's lifelong learning and to our nation's economic well being is recognized up to the highest levels of government, and in businesses, schools, and living rooms across the country. This understanding represents a dramatic shift from earlier decades, and carries with it heightened expectations for what teachers of young children should know and be able to do,ⁱ in light of mounting evidence about inadequate and unequal educational quality, particularly for children of color and those living in low-income families.ⁱⁱ

In recent years, Indiana, like many states, has committed public and private resources toward multiple efforts to improve educational services and to ensure that teacher education degree and certification programs can better prepare their graduates to meet the complex needs of young children of all ages.ⁱⁱⁱ Yet there remains a demand for thousands of new early childhood professionals to provide quality care and education to Indiana's most at-risk children.^{iv} Critical to responding to this need is the establishment of a well-coordinated and comprehensive professional preparation and development system that can ready an incoming generation of professionals, while also strengthening the skills of the existing early education workforce. Institutions of higher education are key to meeting these evolving and increasing demands for improving developmental and learning outcomes for the state's young child population.

The following pages highlight findings from the *Early Childhood Higher Education Inventory*, and the extent to which Indiana ECE higher education programs offer course content and learning experiences that are associated with effective teacher preparation.

Distribution of Indiana Institutions of Higher Education Offering Early Childhood Degree Programs¹

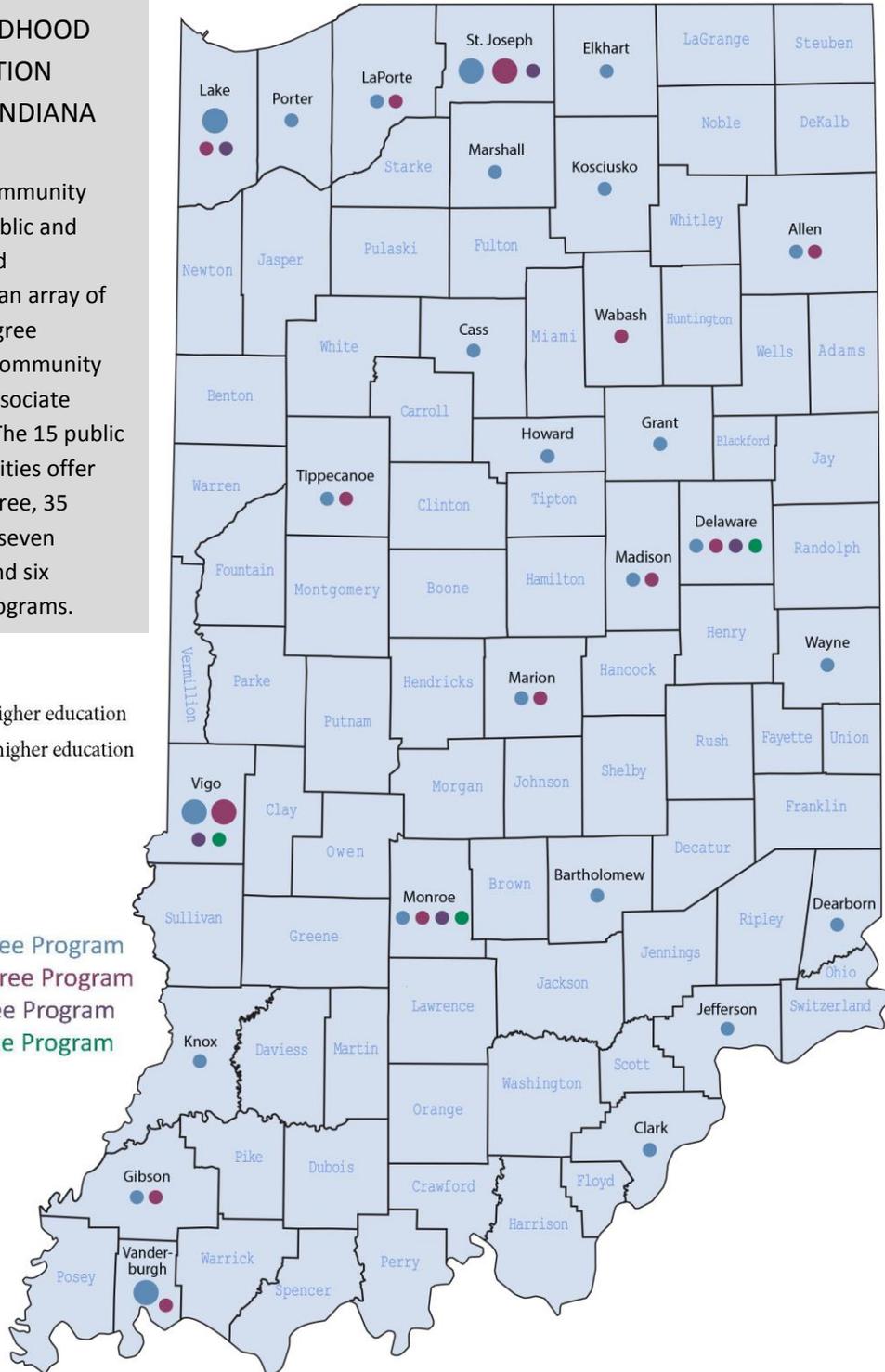
THE EARLY CHILDHOOD HIGHER EDUCATION LANDSCAPE IN INDIANA TODAY

A network of 14 community colleges, and 15 public and private colleges and universities, offers an array of early childhood degree programs. The 14 community colleges offer 27 associate degree programs. The 15 public and private universities offer eight associate degree, 35 bachelor's degree, seven master's degree, and six doctoral degree programs.

Scale:

- = 1 institution of higher education
- = 2 institutions of higher education

- = Associate Degree Program
- = Bachelor's Degree Program
- = Master's Degree Program
- = Doctoral Degree Program



¹Population of degree programs based on data collected in the 2014-2015 academic year.

Note: Some community colleges may offer early childhood associate degree programs online.

PART 1: EARLY CHILDHOOD HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY

Part 1 of the report examines program offerings, faculty characteristics, student supports, and institutional challenges.

FINDING ONE: PROGRAM OFFERINGS Goals, Course Content, and Age-Group Focus

Indiana early childhood degree programs report differing goals for preparing students, with bachelor's degree programs the most likely to identify teacher and/or administrator preparation as their primary goal. These programs offer a range of topics related to child development and approaches to teaching, but content focused on infants and toddlers, and on children who are dual language learners, is less represented across all degree levels. Fewer programs offer content related to administration and leadership than child development and approaches to teaching topics.

FINDING TWO: FIELD-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES Requirements and Age-Group Focus

Students earning a bachelor's degree in early childhood are typically required to complete a student teaching experience, and participate in additional practica. In contrast, the majority of students completing an associate degree in early childhood participate only in practica, and there is little consistency as to the criteria for selecting field sites and supervising teachers, or for the duration and frequency of the experiences. Field experiences are generally not targeted to infants and toddlers.

FINDING THREE: PORTRAIT OF FACULTY Employment Status, Demographics, Professional Background, and Professional Development Needs.

Indiana early childhood degree programs rely heavily on part-time faculty. Faculty members are primarily women, White/Caucasian, middle-aged, and monolingual English-speaking. Most faculty members report having had academic preparation specific to early childhood. Associate degree faculty members are more likely than those at other degree levels to report having worked in other professional roles such as "classroom teacher" or "early childhood professional development provider" in the past decade. Faculty members are particularly interested in professional development related to working with children who are dual language learners, working with diverse groups of children, utilizing technology in teaching, and teacher assessment.

FINDING FOUR: SUPPORTING STUDENTS
Services Offered and Ongoing Challenges

Indiana early childhood degree programs offer multiple types of student support services, including financial counseling, skill support around technology, and academic

tutoring designed to help students access resources and strengthen their academic skills. Program leaders and faculty members indicated, however, that it is a challenge for many institutions to provide adequate student support.

FINDING FIVE: PROGRAM CHALLENGES
Faculty and Program Needs

Indiana early childhood degree programs experience challenges related to time and resources in fulfilling faculty responsibilities, as well as the need for

faculty with specific expertise, and for a more racially and ethnically diverse faculty. Early childhood faculty members are also in need of resources to help them participate in professional development and program planning.

PART 2: EARLY CHILDHOOD HIGHER EDUCATION, AN EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

Part 2 of the report examines how institutions of higher education are adapting to emerging research on the importance of family engagement and early mathematics to young children's development and learning.

FINDING SIX: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
Faculty Attitudes, Required Offerings, and Professional Development Interests

Faculty members consider the inclusion of family engagement to be very important in the preparation of early childhood teachers, and rank its importance on a par with the domain of socio-emotional

development. Multiple topics related to family engagement are embedded in all levels of degree programs, with some variation in age-group focus by degree level and topic. Faculty members express varied levels of interest in professional development in this topic area.

FINDING SEVEN: EARLY MATH

Faculty Attitudes, Required Offerings, Faculty Self-Assessment, Teaching Experience, and Professional Development Interests

Faculty members consider it less important to include early mathematics than other domains in the preparation of early childhood teachers. Multiple topics related to early mathematics are embedded in required course content, with variation by

age-group focus. Many faculty members do not consider themselves prepared to teach early math content, yet interest in ongoing math-related professional development varies by degree level and topic area.

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

We outline below an approach to reconfiguring and strengthening early childhood higher education in Indiana. Our approach is predicated on identifying new resources from state, federal, and philanthropic sources, and reallocating a portion of existing revenues for quality improvement and workforce system development.

1. Unify expectations and pathways for early childhood workforce preparation

- Erase divisions in professional expectations and preparation across and within age groups in the birth-to-age-eight spectrum by establishing a coordinated and comprehensive approach to early childhood certification, for teachers and administrators across settings and with similar levels of education;
- Initiate a process to establish a more uniform system for certifying teachers, administrators and other practitioners across age groups and program auspices throughout the state; and
- Provide clear roadmaps to identify whether a course of study is intended to prepare students for the demands of teaching young children and/or for leading ECE programs, or whether the course of study is designed for other purposes.

2. Strengthen program content and equity across the age span

- Engage faculty groups representing different degree levels and types of institutions, as well as other experts, to strengthen required content related to development and pedagogy across multiple domains, with particular attention to infants and toddlers, and to working with children and adults from diverse linguistic, racial/ethnic, and economic backgrounds; and

- Engage faculty groups representing different degree levels and types of institutions, to develop degree program standards for the timing, frequency, and duration of field-based experiences, with opportunities that are focused on children across the entire birth to age-eight spectrum, and children from diverse backgrounds, and from diverse backgrounds, and that differentiate experiences for pre- and in-service students.

3. Build a leadership pipeline

- Establish a process to identify the specific skills and knowledge needed for common leadership roles in ECE (including teacher leaders, coaches, site administrators, principals, program/quality improvement managers, and teacher educators);
- Identify the appropriate course of study and degree level (lower division, upper division, graduate) for each leadership role, based on the specific skills and knowledge identified above; and
- Investigate strategies used in a variety of disciplines (e.g., health, education, social welfare) to develop a minority faculty development program.

4. Increase faculty support

- Establish an ongoing fund, with well-articulated expectations, for honoraria for individual faculty professional development and for program improvement grants;
- Identify the number of full-time faculty positions necessary, to allow for adequate advising and time with students; and
- Propose strategies for securing potential sources of public and private funds to address the faculty shortage.

END NOTES

A complete list of references can be found in the full narrative report.

ⁱ Whitebook, M., Phillips, D., & Howes, C. (2014) *Worthy work, STILL unlivable wages: The early childhood workforce 25 years after the National Child Care Staffing Study*. Berkeley, CA: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from <http://www.irle.berkeley.edu/cscce/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ReportFINAL.pdf>

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ⁱⁱⁱ Swartz, S. E., & Johnson, J. E. (2010). *Review of recent research on early childhood teacher education programs*. New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development. Ray, A., Bowman, B., & Robbins, J. (2006). *Preparing early childhood teachers to successfully educate all children: The contribution of four-year undergraduate teacher preparation programs*. New York, NY: Foundation for Child Development, and Chicago, IL: Erikson Institute. Hyson, M., Horn, D.M., & Winton, P.J. (2012). Higher education for early childhood educators and outcomes for young children: Pathways toward greater effectiveness. In Pianta, R. (Ed.), *Handbook of early childhood education* (pp. 553-583). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

^{iv} Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee (2015). *ELAC Annual Report 2015*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Early Learning Advisory Committee. Retrieved from: http://www.in.gov/fssa/files/ELAC_Annual_Report_2015_Final.pdf

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