A woman with long dark hair, wearing a red top, is smiling and looking at a young girl with short brown hair. They are both holding and playing with puppets. The woman is holding a white puppet with a purple body, and the girl is holding a red puppet with a white body. The background shows a classroom setting with shelves and colorful storage bins.

Miami-Dade Quality Counts Workforce Study

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION RESEARCH TO PRACTICE BRIEF 2016

Acknowledgements

The Children’s Forum gratefully acknowledges the visionary leadership and financial investments of The Children’s Trust of Miami-Dade County for their unwavering commitment to improve the lives of young children through high quality early care and education via the creation and support of Quality Counts. Additionally, the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe plays a fundamental role in providing leadership and implementation of Quality Counts in partnership with all stakeholders. Finally, the Forum also extends our sincerest gratitude for the contributions of the Quality Counts Career Center, the Professional Development Registry, Child Care WAGE\$ and T.E.A.C.H. staffs at the Children’s Forum for their diligence and commitment to excellence in serving practitioners in Miami-Dade County.

Authors
Melissa Clements, PhD
Phyllis Kalifeh, EdD

Review and Edit
Rachel Spector
Silvia Niño

Graphic Design and Layout
Angeline Kreucher

Introduction

Participation in high-quality early care and education (ECE) programs is linked to better outcomes for children early on and well into adulthood.¹ Quality ECE programs can yield returns as high as \$17.00 for every \$1.00 invested through reduced costs to a myriad of social systems.² Furthermore, higher teacher education and training, continuity of care (high staff retention), and a fairly compensated workforce are critical factors impacting child care quality and optimal child outcomes.³ Understanding how children grow, learn, and develop is essential in implementing evidence-based curricula to improve school readiness and overall child well-being. Moreover, the quality of the interactions between the adults and children in the classroom plays a significant role in helping children grow, thrive and reach their potential.⁴

With this knowledge, The Children’s Trust invests resources aimed at improving program quality and the competence of the early childhood workforce to ensure young children in Miami-Dade County are ready to succeed in school and in life. These investments support Quality Counts (QC), Miami-Dade County’s quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs launched in 2008. The Quality Counts initiative is grounded in research and the recommendations of the National Academies of Science, Institute of Medicine. The exhibit below shows the interrelated functions of factors contributing to quality practices based on the theory of change for improved child outcomes which serves as the basis for Quality Counts.

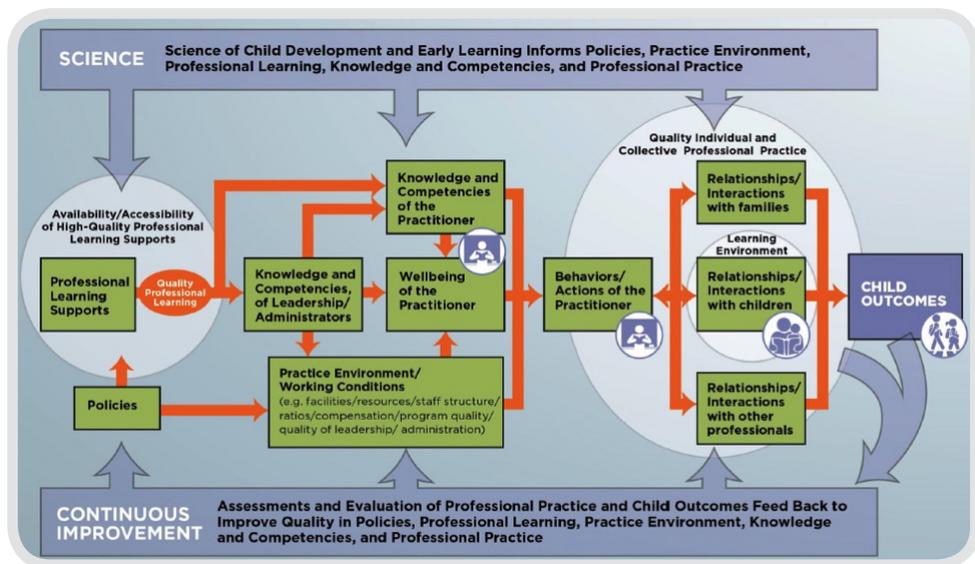


Exhibit 1. Factors Contributing to Quality Practices.

Note: From *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth Through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (2015).⁴

With on-going funding from The Children’s Trust, the Children’s Forum manages the Quality Counts Career Center (QCCC) to administer quality improvement services (e.g., coaching around classroom-based practices and professional development), monetary scholarships and salary supplements for obtaining degrees and credentials in the ECE field, and a training registry and data repository known as the Professional Development Registry. This workforce study update serves as an important resource for stakeholders and funders to evaluate the success of these initiatives, communicate key findings, and inform future policy and practice considerations.

Background

To understand the nuances of the early childhood workforce in Miami-Dade County, a comprehensive workforce study was conducted and published in January 2011⁵. Subsequently, workforce study updates have been conducted on an annual basis.

The current study represents an update based on employment and education data available as of March 2016 for program sites participating in the full Professional Development (PD) Services offered through the Quality Counts Career Center (QCCC) encompassing on-site classroom-based and professional development coaching, wage supplements, and educational scholarships. Programs include licensed child care centers and family child care homes (FCCHs).

The Professional Development Registry includes a wealth of workforce information for Miami-Dade ECE teaching staff and directors at programs participating in Quality Counts, making it possible to understand the characteristics of the Quality Counts workforce and offer a picture of the influence of Quality Counts on ECE training opportunities and staff qualifications. A brief summary of the key findings for each study question and relevant policy implications are provided in this Research to Practice Brief.

-Findings- Demographics

What are the characteristics of ECE programs in QC?

- ◆ 3,331 practitioners at 413 program site receive services.
- ◆ 368 centers employ 98% of practitioners.
- ◆ 45 FCCHs employ 2% of practitioners.

What are the characteristics of the QC workforce?

- ◆ Primarily female
- ◆ Middle aged (46 years on average)
- ◆ Largely Spanish speaking and of Hispanic origin
- ◆ Originating from over 30 different countries
- ◆ Cuba and the United States most prevalent countries of origin

Exhibit 2. Percentage of Practitioners by Primary Language Spoken (N = 3,331).

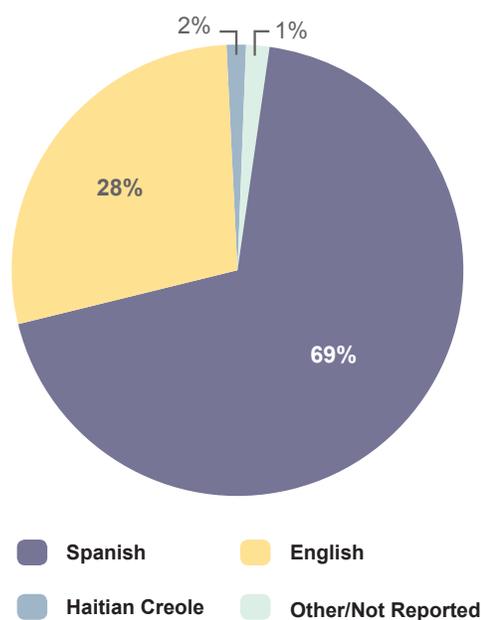
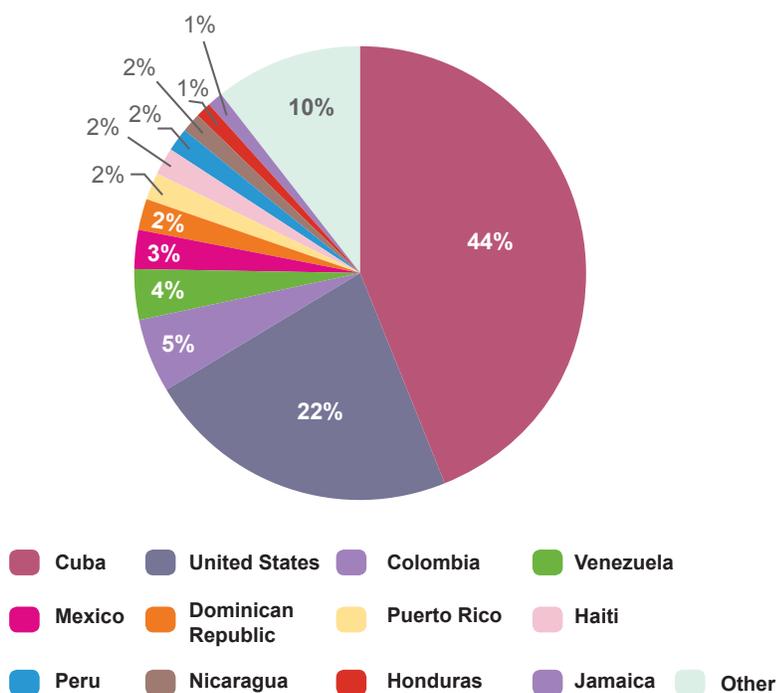


Exhibit 3. Percentage of Practitioners by Country of Origin (N = 3,331).



-Findings- Training and Education

What is the educational attainment of the QC workforce?

Highest Education Level:

- ◆ 16% = no diploma/degree on record
- ◆ 51% = high school diploma
- ◆ 10% = associate's degree/equivalent
- ◆ 20% = bachelor's degree
- ◆ 2% = graduate level degree

Director Credential:

- ◆ 60% of program sites have a Director with a Foundational Level I or II Director Credential.
- ◆ 40% of program sites have a director with an Advanced Director Credential.

Staff Credential:

- ◆ 80% of teaching staff hold a DCF issued Florida Staff Credential/FCCPC.
- ◆ 13% of teaching staff hold a National CDA.

Has educational attainment improved? Has progress been made on professional development goals?

- ◆ 9% improved overall educational level.
- ◆ 83% made progress toward professional goals (accepted educational scholarship).
- ◆ 84% of teaching staff who did not have a Florida Staff Credential or equivalent at QC entry now have obtained one.
- ◆ 32% of program sites whose director did not have an Advanced Credential at QC entry now have one.
- ◆ 50% of Child Care WAGE\$® (WAGE\$) participants increased on the WAGE\$ salary supplement scale.
- ◆ Longer WAGE\$ participation linked with greater increases on the WAGE\$ scale.

Note: Child Care WAGE\$® is a licensed program created by the Child Care Services Association in North Carolina. Teachers meeting participation requirements receive a salary supplement on a semi-annual basis according to an incremental scale ranging from Level 1 to Level 8. Each level specifies a required level of education or continuing course work toward degrees with an accompanying supplement amount. Since movement up the scale is incremental, teachers can increase the amount of their supplement by participating in ongoing education toward a degree. The highest level requires an advanced degree in early childhood or child development. In Miami-Dade, practitioners must remain with their employer for the previous six months and earn less than \$17.50 per hour, successfully complete 3 ECE credits or 4.5 CEUs in early childhood or the English language every two years and remain in good standing. Priority is given to those working in designated geographical areas.

Exhibit 4. Percentage of Practitioners Improving on Highest Education Level (N = 2000).

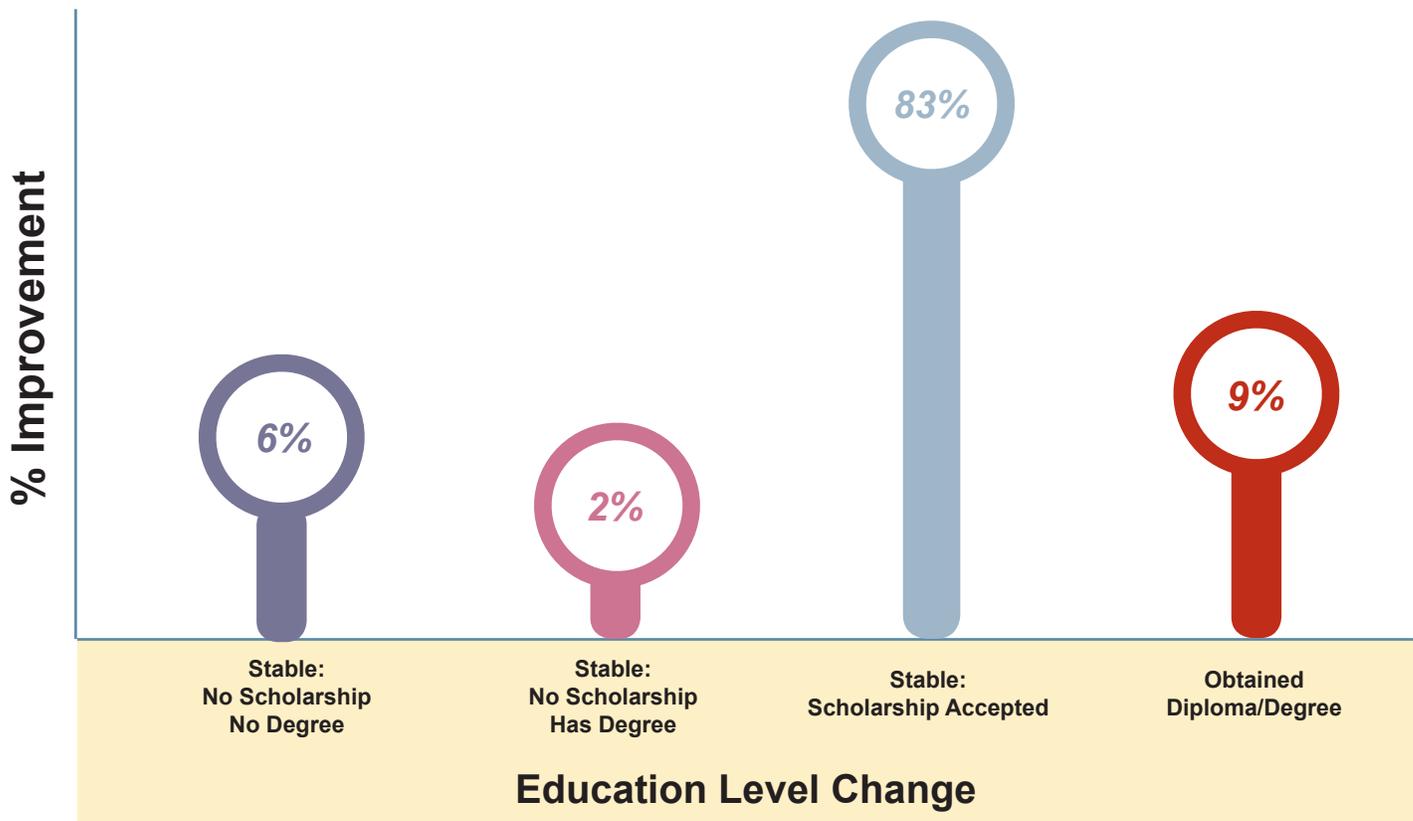
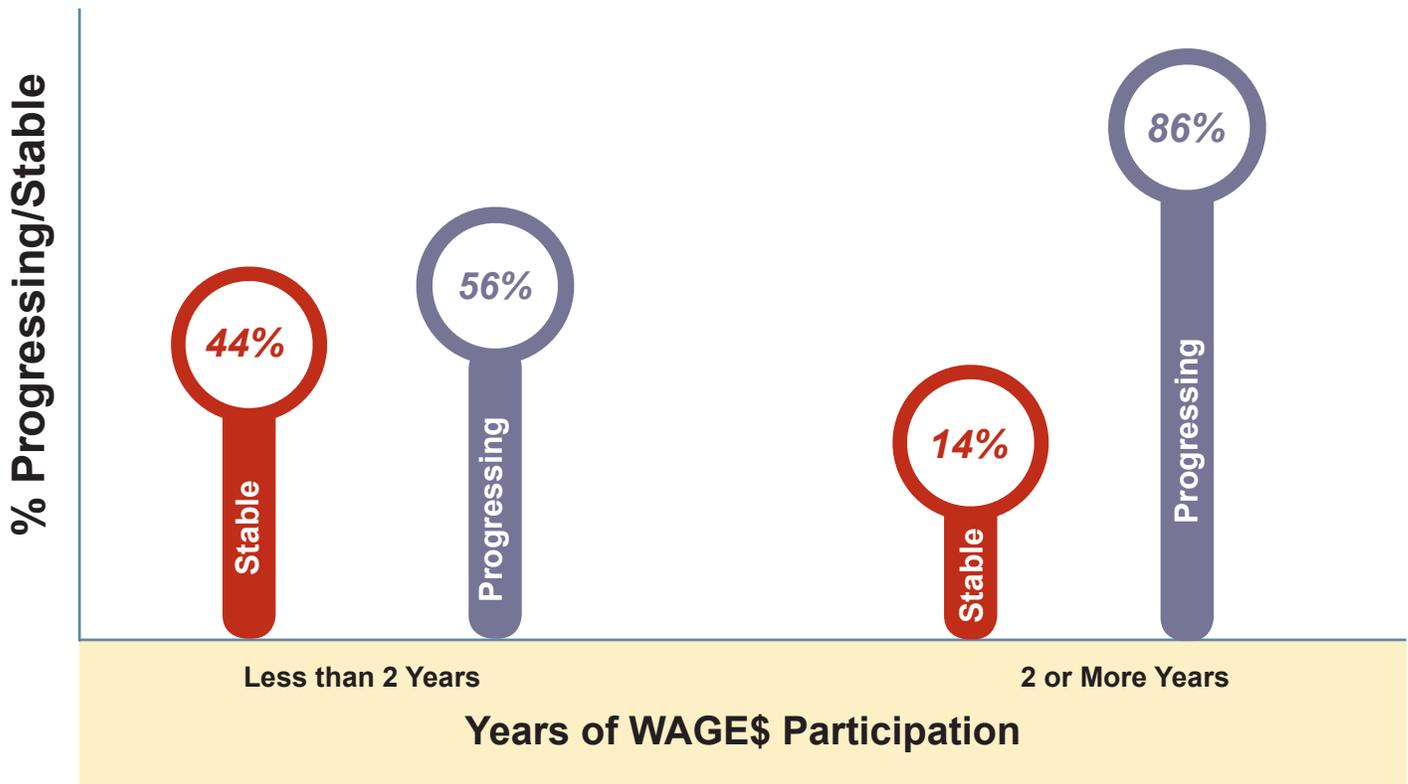


Exhibit 5. WAGE\$ Performance by Years of Participation: Percentage of Practitioners Progressing/Remaining Stable (N = 415).



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

- **Stable** = Stable WAGE\$ scale level of 1 to 5 from initial level to most recent level
- **Progressing** = Increased a WAGE\$ level or remained stable at Scale Level 6 to 8

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

- ◆ On average it takes about two to three years for practitioners to obtain a higher education level during QC participation (obtain a high school diploma or college degree).
- ◆ Those practitioners who improve their education level during QC participation are more likely to accept credit-bearing scholarships than scholarships for non-credit trainings or document translations.

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

Education Change Group	Average Years to Achieve Current Education Level (N = 178)
Obtain HS Diploma (n = 69)	2.4
Obtain Degree (n = 81)	2.8
Obtain Higher Degree (n = 28)	2.9

- Findings - Employment and Benefits

What is the employment status of the QC workforce?

- ◆ 86% employed full-time
- ◆ Employed at current program for 7 years on average
 - ◆ Directors employed at current program for 10 years on average
 - ◆ Teachers employed at current program for 6 years on average

What are the earnings of the QC workforce?

- ◆ Median hourly wage for the full workforce = \$9.00
 - ◆ Directors median hourly wage = \$12.50
 - ◆ Teachers median hourly wage = \$9.00

What benefits are available and accessed by the QC workforce?

- ◆ 14% received no benefits from their employer
- ◆ 86% received one or more benefits from their employer

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

- ◆ 82% = Paid Time Off
- ◆ 46% = Professional Development
- ◆ 24% = Health/Vision/Dental
- ◆ 15% = Retirement



What is the staff retention rate for QC programs? Is staff retention linked to QC scholarship usage and WAGE\$ participation?

- ◆ Median staff retention rate for QC centers is 80% (median turnover rate = 20%).
- ◆ Centers with higher retention rates have higher rates of QC scholarship usage ($r = .24, p < .001$) and WAGE\$ usage ($r = .17, p < .05$).

What factors are associated with earnings of the QC workforce?

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

1. **English Language Skills:** Primary English speakers can expect to make \$1.57 more per hour on average than those whose primary language is not English.
2. **Years of employment with their current program:** For every five years employed with their current program, practitioners can expect to make nearly \$1.00 more per hour.
3. **Educational Status:** Practitioners holding college degrees can expect to make an average of \$2.46 more an hour compared to non-degree holders. Those with a degree have higher wages regardless of English proficiency, but the impact of holding a degree is greater when the primary language is English. Primary English speakers with a degree make \$4.21 more per hour compared to \$1.75 more per hour for those with a degree whose primary language is not English.

Exhibit 7. Impact on Hourly Wage.

Factors	Impact on Hourly Wage		
	All Practitioners	English Not Primary Language	English Primary Language
If English is the primary language	\$1.57** more	N/A	N/A
For every additional year of employment	\$0.18** more	\$0.16.** more	\$0.20** more
If employed in low income area	\$0.48** less	\$0.18 less	\$1.20** less
Has a college degree	\$2.46** more	\$1.75** more	\$4.21** more

**Significantly higher/lower hourly wage at $p < .01$.



These findings show the “unique” contribution of each factor in the context of all of the other factors. For example, having a high comfort level with the English language (as measured by primary language) significantly impacts hourly wage even after taking the impact of other factors into consideration such as years of employment with the current employer, educational experience, and program location. Of note, being of Hispanic or Haitian ethnicity is also significantly related to lower hourly wages but not after taking primary language into consideration. This suggests that a practitioner’s proficiency and comfort level with the English language, an ability they can improve upon, affects what they are paid by their employer much more so than their native ethnicity.

In summary, acquiring a degree, having strong English language skills, and remaining with their employer longer-term can help practitioners garner higher wages and increase their value at their programs and in the ECE workforce. As well, developing strong English language skills can help practitioners get the most value out of their degrees. Insomuch as over seventy percent of the Miami-Dade QC workforce identifies a primary language other than English and two-thirds do not currently hold a degree, an important take-home message for this large majority of practitioners is that they can strengthen their English proficiency and education levels to improve their earning potential. These goals are within reach and can improve their competence in working with young children and increase their value in the marketplace.

Policy Implications

The findings from this update mirror those found in prior years and have provided an opportunity to reflect on existing policies and practices and make adjustments to ensure the best outcomes for children. Low wages continue to challenge the field in retaining a qualified workforce equipped with the skills needed to improve child outcomes. Practitioners accepting scholarships and those receiving wage supplements through the Child Care WAGES program are more likely to remain in their programs and improve their education. Fortunately, opportunities have expanded within the professional development system in Miami-Dade County for practitioners to increase their earning potential, particularly for those who are less proficient in English. The following strategies are currently being implemented as a result of this research:

- ◆ A comprehensive communications and awareness campaign was launched in collaboration with system partners to engage, support, and encourage practitioners.
- ◆ Quality Improvement Specialists share study findings with practitioners, especially those with limited English proficiency, to encourage their educational pursuits.
- ◆ Miami-Dade educational institutions expanded opportunities for practitioners to access credit-bearing and continuing education bilingual programs to acquire English skills and simultaneously improve their competencies in working with young children.

In summary, supports provided by the QCCC, in particular coaching to improve classroom practices and professional development and administration of scholarships and wage supplements appear to be motivating practitioners to pursue higher levels of education and remain with their employer for longer periods of time. As the research suggests, children experience better outcomes with access to high quality programs and an educated, fairly compensated workforce providing continuity of care.

Footnotes

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