

Promising models for preparing a diverse, high-quality early childhood workforce ^[1]

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Excerpted from the executive summary

Decades of research have established that the first years of a child's life provide a foundation for long-term health and well-being, and that early childhood education (ECE) for children birth to age 5 can have a positive effect on children's development and school readiness. In order for ECE programs to appropriately support this development, they need educators who are prepared to create engaging, inclusive, and developmentally grounded learning environments and who can effectively reach and teach diverse learners. Although most ECE programs with a track record of success call for educators to possess specialized training in early childhood and a bachelor's degree, requirements for early educators in many states are much less ambitious, and access to high-quality preparation programs is limited. As a consequence, relatively few early educators participate in in-depth formal preparation (i.e., preservice education) before they start working in the field. Instead, they may return to institutions of higher education at various points throughout their careers to learn and increase their qualifications or credentials.

A number of states are considering policy proposals to update credential or degree requirements for early educators. Practitioners, policy experts, and researchers have expressed concern, however, that well-intentioned policies to raise educator qualifications without sufficient supports may have negative consequences for the adequacy; stability; and racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the ECE workforce and may result in a shortage of educators.

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